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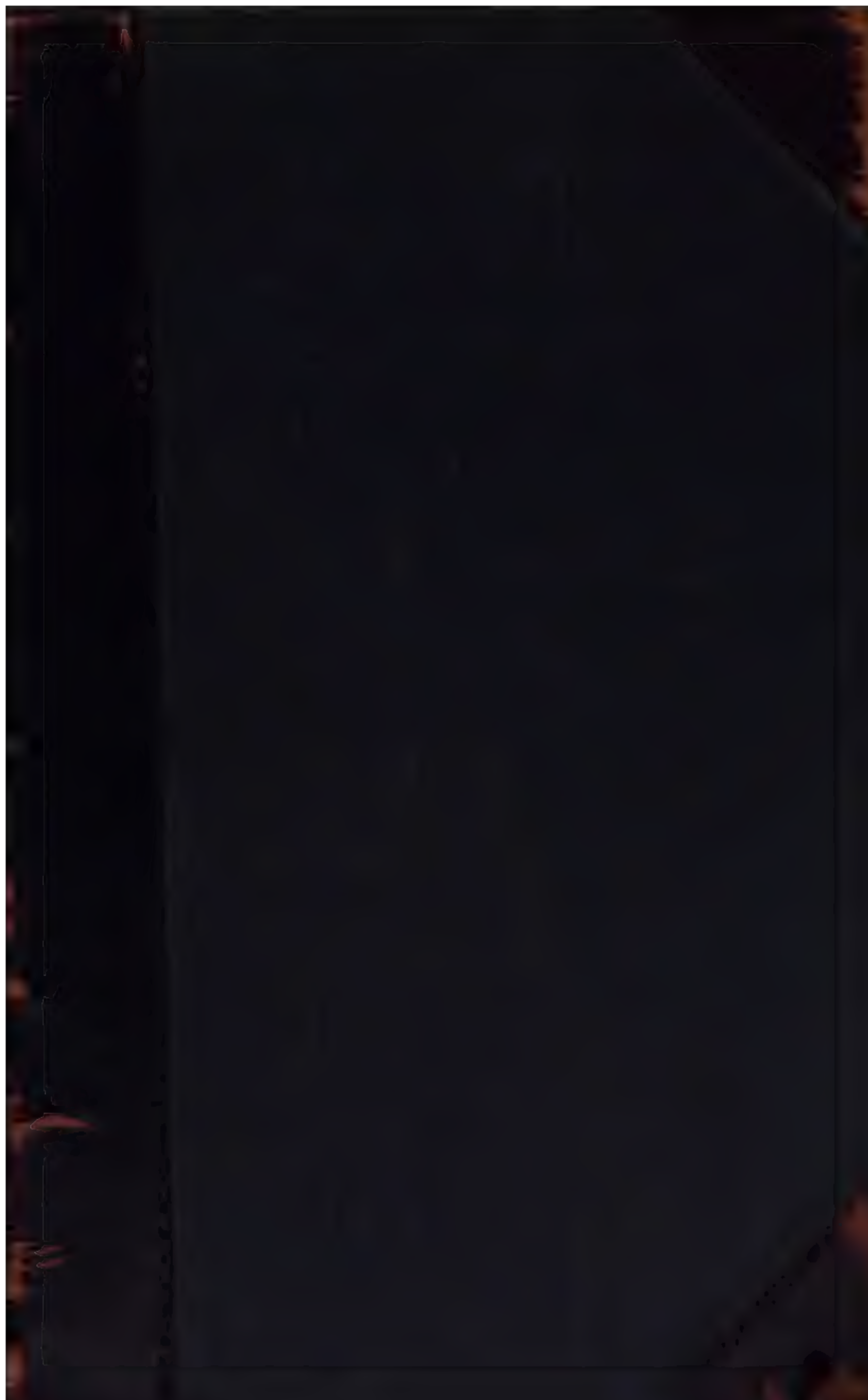
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S AND OCCASIONS,

ARLY ON THE

S AND FASTS

OF THE

OF ENGLAND.

BY THE

W GORDON, BART. M.A.

FORD, AND RECTOR OF WEST-TILBURY, ESSEX.

extraordinary presence, hath hallowed certain *places*,
have as justly attached respect to certain *times*;
who truly honour God, ought ever to hold these times
in S." HOOKER, Eccl. Pol. Book v.

terrarum orbe servantur, vel ab ipsis Apostolis, vel
quorum est saluberrima in Ecclesia auctoritas, statuta
et; sicuti quod Domini Passio, et Resurrectio, et in
et Adventus Spiritus Sancti, anniversaria solennitate
August. Epist.

LONDON:

N STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.

1796.

a. 145.

A
COLLECTION
OF
SERMONS
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS AND OCCASIONS,
PARTICULARLY ON THE
FESTIVALS AND FASTS
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY THE

REV. SIR ADAM GORDON, BART. M.A.

LATE OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD, AND RECTOR OF WEST-TILBURY, ESSEX.

“ No doubt, as God's extraordinary presence, hath hallowed certain *places*,
so his extraordinary works have as justly attached respect to certain *times*;
for which reason, they who truly honour God, ought ever to hold these times
more holy than other days.”

HOOKER, Eccl. Pol. Book v.

———“ Quæ toto terrarum orbe servantur, vel ab ipsis Apostolis, vel
“ Conciliis generalibus, quorum est saluberrima in Ecclesia auctoritas, statuta
“ esse intelligere licet; sicuti quod Domini Passio, et Resurrectio; et in
“ Cælum Ascensus, et Adventus Spiritus Sancti, anniversaria solennitate
“ celebrarentur.”

August. Epist.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.

1796.

1. a. 145.



TO THE
REVEREND JOSEPH ATWELL SMALL, D.D.
RECTOR OF ST. JAMES'S AND ST. PAUL'S, BRISTOL,
PREBENDARY OF GLOUCESTER,
AND
CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY;
THIS
COLLECTION OF SERMONS
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY ADDRESSED,
BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,
ADAM GORDON.

WINNEMOUTH, HERTS,
Feb. 9, 1796.

DEDICATORY EPISTLE.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE the accidental pleasure of seeing you in the Summer of 1793, when forced from my retreat, by the severest of domestic calamities, I have endeavoured, as often as health, and spirits would permit,—to alleviate the pressure of my misfortune, by occasionally revising some professional labours, which I had *formerly* in contemplation to publish; but which a series of afflictive events, had for some time interrupted.

Knowing the just sense you entertain of the sacred profession in which we are engaged; and having been witness to your laudable exertions in promoting the interest of that excellent establishment in which we have the honor to officiate; I persuade myself, that the placing your name in front of this humble performance, will be considered as no unacceptable testimony of esteem, from an old acquaintance:—especially, as the object is similar with your own,—the public benefit.

Long secluded from the world, I have particularly employed my leisure, in studies of this cast, which I conceived might assist the rational,

and Christian improvement of the lower classes of society; of which my parochial charge is principally composed; and as that description of people doth likewise form the larger portion of the community, I was encouraged by the favorable reception given to some *former* efforts of the kind, by a very dear, and judicious friend, to ~~submit~~ *this* collection also, to the public view, in hopes it might prove useful to the valuable cause of religious information, no less than the support of some important subjects, which through fashionable negligence, or the antiquity of their date, are growing out of becoming notice. In short, the effort seemed *expedient*, for this particular reason, that few of the common people, especially in country places, have any just notion of the solemn seasons appointed to be kept holy by the Church of which they are members.—This accounts for the too general neglect of her ordinances; and being very injurious to her cause, it seemed to demand a *remedy*. To inform the understanding of those who labour under the want of sound religious education respecting the appointments of the established Church, is the object of this Collection of Discourses; which I trust may be found useful, not only to satisfy the mind on the *propriety* of such acts of worship, but to supply the reader with an answer to those, who object to
our

DEDICATORY EPISTLE.

our forms, or dissent from our principles of Church-government.—With this good design they were composed,—preached,—and printed; and I hope He who alone can put into our hearts good desires, will be pleased to bless the endeavor, as his glory, and the benefit of his creatures, gave rise to the undertaking.

The work was originally intended to be presented, on the principle of this present address, to the Gentleman alluded to above, but whom it pleased God lately to remove, from this scene of vicissitude and trial.—As you are among the few, of the very intimate friends of my early life, whom I have not survived, and to whom such a work can be presented with the strictest propriety, and as I have been in the habit of sending most of my humble publications abroad, under the protection of some respectable name,—I avail myself of the renewal of our acquaintance, to request of you that degree of recommendation of this volume, among your numerous connections, as in your judgment, it may be found to merit.

Having mentioned my prior intention, with respect to the dedication, I have been induced to affix the *first* address, in its genuine state, both as an affectionate tribute to the memory of a very kind friend;—and because I think it will afford particular gratification to those very dear relations of the deceased, into whose hands

this book may come;—and as I trust that several passages it contains, may be justly construed, as no less applicable to *yourself*, there needs no further apology for preserving it.

I should be very deficient, if I was to omit reverting to your hospitable reception of me in the early state of my severe distress, and its occasional alleviation from your society, when I wanted fortitude to return to those trying scenes, which for so many years before, had yielded sweet domestic comfort;—but now the mournful retrospect is become familiar;—“*May wisdom blossom from my MORTAL wound.*”

I cannot avoid confessing, that the event which happened in your neighborhood, so soon after my departure, uniting with other flattering circumstances at that very time, contributed to raise my wishes for a *situation near you*,—and afforded ample cause for “*disappointment to smile afresh, at Hope’s career.*”—*Deo alitur visum est.*—The dream soon vanished,—and I hastened to cultivate *contentment* with redoubled zeal.—I trust I have found that prize, without which, all others only serve to feed the fever of ambition.—It behoves me, therefore, to declare my grateful, and becoming sentiments, for my recovery from the temporary delusion, and this it is impossible to do more happily, than in the language of the sublime, and pious writer who yields

yields me daily consolation, and delight, and whose life, in many articles of the most afflictive nature, no less than in his frustrated, though well-grounded expectations, so much resembles my own experience.

“ Blest be the hand divine which gently laid
“ My heart at rest beneath this humble shed :
“ The world’s a stately bark on dang’rous seas,
“ With pleasure *seen*, but *boarded* at our peril.
“ Here—on a single plank thrown safe ashore,
“ I hear the tumult of the distant throng,
“ As that of seas remote, or dying storms ;
“ And meditate on scenes more silent still,
“ Pursue my theme, and fight THE FEAR OF DEATH.”

With most cordial wishes, my dear Sir, that you may escape all the dangers which render the voyage of elevated life most hazardous; and that we may meet at last in the same blessed port of eternal peace and happiness,

I remain your’s, very sincerely

And affectionately,

ADAM GORDON.

TO HIS

MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND

THE REV. ROBERT DINGLEY, L.L.D.

RECTOR OF BEAUMONT, ESSEX, &c. &c.

DEAR SIR,

I DO not know that a dedication can be addressed with more *propriety*,—I am sure it cannot be with greater *pleasure*, than to an old, and valuable acquaintance.

Efforts of this kind, it is true, like strangers at court, are supposed more likely to be noticed, by the pomp of their introduction; but really the times are grown so very censorious, and uncharitable, that if a work happens to be honoured with the title of nobility, or dignified support, both patron and author, are sometimes exposed to the same ungenerous surmise.—All that escapes the pen in such a case, under the becoming impulse of grateful homage, is placed to the account of *adulation*, or selfish interest,—and the patron perhaps, is no less unfairly taxed with vanity, or over-rated praise, than the writer with servility, and narrow design;—so that it is no wonder the Great are often slack in countenancing Dedications.—It used not to be so;—nor can we impute this shameful change but to the increased degeneracy of the age.—Of old,—authors, though they had sometimes

sometimes as little chance among the undiscerning, dissipated throng (as even now) to gain *material* favor,—yet as to the patient, and well intentioned labours of the mind, they were almost sure to meet some fostering hand to usher their works abroad; and however scantily they might be allowed to fare at *home*, they experienced transient regard for their works sake, if not their *own*.

After all, I find upon enquiry, it is much the same with *us* in this respect, as has been the case in distant ages, and other nations.—The elegant Pliny accounts for this complaint, with his usual judgment; and in the comparison of the declining manners of his own times, with the laudable practice of more ancient days, he lashes this neglect with merited severity.—He affords us, likewise, the most just apology for the task of *dedicating*, that can be offered:—he shames at once, the ignorance, and illiberality of those pedantic writers, who in their partial, or inaccurate definition of the word, have branded it with foul construction,—and whose sarcastic interpretation, if they believed it *just*, should have led them to establish the opinion by the testimony of their *own uniform example*;—whereas, we shall find some who reproach the practice in the strongest terms, yet frequently employing the objected spirit of it,
in

in the most fulsome manner.—I will give you *one* instance of this, in a very favorite author*.
 —He calls a *Dedication*, indiscriminately, “*a servile address to any patron*,” pronouncing the word synonymous with *adulation*; and yet the same great genius, could introduce even a MORAL essay to a MOST PROFLIGATE PEER with “*Friend of my life*,” &c. &c. Not so, speaks Pliny on the subject,—he gives us the unpolluted, and real *design*, and *use* of Dedications, and reflects upon the manners of the people, in the reason of their being discouraged. “*Fuit moris antiqui, eos qui vel singulorum laudes, vel urbium scripserant, aut honoribus, aut pecunia ornare: nostris vero temporibus, ut alia speciosa, et egregia, ita hoc in primis exolevit. Nam postquam desimus facere laudanda, laudari quoque ineptum putamus.*” †

But

* Pope.—See Dr. Johnson’s sense of the word as given by this celebrated author.

† As a comment on this excellent quotation, it may justly be observed, that unless *principle*, and a sense of bounden *duty* impelled the unwearied labours of professional industry, there is now a-days but small encouragement for any extraordinary exertion in clerical pursuits.—In so little vogue are the demands for theological disquisitions, in these dissipated times, that after exhausting the vigor of both mind, and body, in ceaseless studies, and passing a whole life in obscurity, and care, it is doubtful whether the fruits of daily confinement, and nightly toil, obtain a *reading*,—or pay for *publication*. A
 very

But no base alloy can *possibly* be attributed to *this* humble mark of affectionate attachment. I have nothing to expect from my *present* patron, but the occasional, and agreeable news of his *own* welfare, and that of those so dear to him,—nor will the most snarling Cynick dare to sully with the stain of *adulation*, a grateful and becoming acknowledgment of generous concern for the success and comforts of one who was the companion of your early years,—or object to my recording an honest panegyric of the man, whom neither time,—distance,—or any of the vicissitudes and pleas which superficial professors allege in extenuation of insincerity, have weaned from thinking, and acting, in the noblest character of human nature:—THE FEELING,—ZEALOUS FRIEND.—

Here, perhaps, the criticks may be disposed to judge *severely*:—they will possibly advance, that however justly we may depict a *patron's* merit,—Modesty should always guard us from even *glancing* at our *own*.—Nothing *materially*

very *different* description of character, too often succeeds in possessing those *honors*, and *emoluments*, which in the purer days of just *distinction*, and generous notice, were worthily distributed, as originally *designed*:—viz. to promote, and recompence a becoming exertion of intellectual abilities, and a diligent perseverance in the arduous, and essential duties of the sacred office.

exception—

DEDICATORY EPISTLE.

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exceptionable, I trust hath escaped me of *that* description—a'importe.—I shall always glory in the esteem of the *sincere*:—The comments of a *worldling*, will never affect the principles, or happiness of the *disinterested*.—Let the false, and selfish, enjoy themselves to the utmost they are able;—as all-such need every artifice to shield them from a thorough view of their natural deformity, it would be cruel to deny them any temporary apology they can devise, or to hold up a mirror that would only *terrify*, without establishing a *cure*—as Christians, we must pray that a *superior* Counsellor may *speedily* and *effectually* shew them to *themselves*, and that being alarmed at their *true* appearance, they may *repent*, and *amend*.

A few words concerning the work thus introduced, and I will release you.

Books, my worthy friend, our profession teaches us, are no further of essential value, than as they help our advancement in sterling wisdom; as they incline us to admire, and love the *Gospel*.—The contents of this feeble performance, however deficient in its *execution*, I can honestly affirm, has had *that end* in view; and as I persuade myself, from former experience of your indulgence, that it will be *pleasing* at least, occasionally to review the studies of one, with whom you once lived in habits of most
social

social intercourse ; so perhaps it may not be altogether *unprofitable*, to meditate on the *change* from careless gaiety, to an earnest, however incompetent endeavour to discharge the duties of the most serious, and important *functions*.—Further, I shall not hazard on the task, but submit its contents to your deliberate and candid judgment.

I do not promise any brilliant strokes of imagination, as pleasing hand-maids to engage attention to the powerful voice of *Truth*—Genius, no doubt, is a most desirable attendant to prepare the way for the admission of solemn subjects. We can never too much exert our talents in HIS glorious cause, who furnishes every gift we have:—But in these discourses (projected principally for the instruction of those in humble life) you will not expect that fire which several of the interesting themes might justly be supposed to raise.—Besides,—where, even a more animated style might well have been indulged,—*power*, does not *ever* keep pace with *inclination*.

“ *Non eadem est ætas, non mens.* ”

To us, in the *wane* of life, nothing can be more necessary than to re-consider the manifold errors of former days—to use judicious industry to repair the mischief which youthful indiscretion

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tion may have wrought upon the principles of our faith, and practice ; and to *redeem the time* by every possible expedient.

A *life* of disappointment, on *my* part, has, under the wise and merciful direction of the SUPREME, corrected (though late) that restless malady which fascinating hope inflicts upon the sanguine expectant of worldly favour, and an *additional incurable wound** (however cicatrized by the palliating balsam of due submission to the will of Heaven) yet subjects me occasionally, to those tender, and natural feelings, which *parents* only, can conceive :—Sensations, *irresistible, and ineffable* !

“ *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo.*”

Thus, though I am indebted to the unmerited goodness of the Almighty, for much inward consolation, under many trials ; yet may I truly say, I gradually descend *in sorrow to the grave*.—With this sketch of my situation, you will justly conclude, that while I am indulged in the choice blessings of freedom from bodily pain, and strength to perform the duties of my office, I ought with gratitude, and sincerity, to cultivate a pious submission to every visitation dispensed by the unerring Director of events,

* The loss of an *only child*—a youth of extraordinary talents, and promising virtues.

that may prove conducive to unfading happiness hereafter.

Truditur dies die.—All will soon be over: and though we may have unhappily slumbered in the *morning* of our day,—yet if we are found active, and vigilant, to the *close* of it, I devoutly trust, all will be well for HIS sake, who alone supplieth the will, and power to act;—whose grace and whose atonement will be found sufficient, for every humble, faithful penitent.

You, my dear friend, are indulged with the choicest blessings this trying, fleeting scene, can yield*.—By *happy* experience I am sensible they are capable of softening every other care, and rendering the *severest frowns* of fortune *insignificant*; any further than the precious gifts may *themselves* be injured in the course of *our* mischances.—May these invaluable comforts be continued to you, as honourable cheering props to your declining years.—If you *train them in the way that they should go*,—excess of bliss, past all expression, will accumulate your future joy. Then shall you *not be ashamed to meet our bitterest enemy in the gate*.—This is the hope that alleviates my mournful reflections, when I meditate upon the *single* charge so long entrusted to me. I strove to be most diligent and circumspect, as to the several parts of my in-

* A good wife, and dear children,

cumbent duty as a parent, and doubtless had a large return, both in present comfort, and future expectation: but I often think (though now too late) I might have done *a great deal more, and better*.—Most cordially do I pray that the above, and every other essential happiness, may be your portion.—And I beg you to believe me, with the purest regard,

Your obliged,

And affectionate friend,

ADAM GORDON.

N. B. This gentleman died a little time after this Dedication was written, which being penned from the *heart*, I transmit, as a becoming tribute to the memory of a *real friend*.—Some of his nearest connexions having applied to me to express my sense of his character, in a *monumental* style—I made the following sketch, which I here subjoin, as an additional testimony of my esteem, though the peculiar allusions in it must be lost to those, who were unacquainted with our intimacy, and the various circumstances which endeared it.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
Of the Rev. ROBERT DINGLEY, L. L. B.
Formerly of Christ Church, in the University of Oxford.
And late Rector of Beaumont, &c. near Colchester, Essex.

He was a man of most engaging manners, lively wit, and
STERLING PROBITY.

In the respective characters of Son, Brother, Husband, Father,
Magistrate, and Friend,

He obtained that just report which dignifies our nature.
Reader,—whosoever thou art, whether in pursuit of pleasure, or of
HEALTH*,

Peruse this tribute to Benevolence and Worth.
Hast thou e'er felt the force of holy friendship in thy breast;
Or found its cheering influence from others?
Lament a steady votary of this heavenly virtue.
Nor time,—neglect,—obscurity,—or need,
Could shake the generous purpose of *professed regard*;
Even, in **DEATH**; affectionate perseverance marked

THE LIBERAL MIND,
And life, and friendship's lingering flame, took leave together;
Art thou a *Christian*? Learn from a *brother*,
The hardest lesson of thy arduous course;
The summit of thy best attainments,

ENTIRE SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE DECREES.
Happy, in the happiest state *this scene can boast*—
With further happiness in view, from the endearing tie
Of Nature's *choicest* gifts

He caught a glimpse of far *superior* joys:
GOD'S WILL BE DONE,
Evinced the final victory on **SELF**,
And sealed the hope, that **JESUS** was his *Friend*.

A sympathizing heart, will better feel, than words can paint,
How great a loss is suffered by his disconsolate Widow,
Who from due attention to his memory,
Erects this monument as a lasting token of her
AFFECTION.

* He died at *Beth*.

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* This is printed by mistake in the body of the work as a Sermon, instead of an introductory discourse to the following fix.

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SER.

SERMONS, &c.

SERMON I.

On the Expediency of employing our Time well.

FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY.

JOHN ix. part of the 4th verse.

—*The night cometh, when no man can work.*

I SHALL divide the order of my instruction to you this day, my brethren, into *two parts*. The first, I shall employ in a *general* exhortation to consider the *necessity* of the work that is laid upon us; by affording you a comparative view of what *should* be the conduct of all Christians, with what really *is* the common practice of many persons, who esteem themselves entitled to that character.

Secondly, I shall beg leave to submit some heads of self-examination, as to the degree of Christian faith, to which we have attained; and I shall conclude, with proposing some easy, and profitable rules for your future conduct, and the improvement of your time.

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But before I enter upon the general subject, it may be proper in this place, according to my usual practice on stated times, appointed by the church to be kept holy, to draw your attention to the *peculiar* service of this day, which is distinguished in our calendar, as the anniversary of our blessed Lord's *circumcision*; that is, when in his wonderful condescension of submitting to a state of infancy, he further underwent that ceremony of the Jewish law, which God commanded his servant Abraham to perform on all his family, as a *sign* of his covenant with him, and his seed after him, as related in the first lesson for this morning service.—Abraham in the purity of his *faith* in God's word, received this ordinance, as a *sign, evidence, and assurance*, both of the blessings promised by the Great and Holy Being who appointed it, and particularly that he would give them Christ, the promised seed, out of the loins of Abraham (that is, in regular succession of *his* family, according to the flesh,) and in him, accept of them, for his peculiar people, pardon their sins, and cleanse them from their natural corruption, signified by the act of circumcision; as likewise of men's obligations to the duties required, viz. to believe in the Messiah, or Saviour; to put off the old man, naturally addicted to worldly lusts, and serve him as *new creatures*, which is also represented by Abraham's acceptance of, and submission to this ceremony. The *spiritual* signification of the ordinance, is fully intimated in the second lesson for this morning, and the collect for the day, and is what chiefly concerns all Christians, such persons only, being

being of the true spiritual seed of Abraham, who really possess the thing signified by that sign, or ceremony; and perform those things which outward circumcision was designed to engage unto, Phil. iii. 3. viz. *purity of heart, and life*. In short, the Saviour of the world submitted, as at this season, in our human nature, to be subject to the law; and being initiated by this institution into the Jewish church, he became bound to the *obedience* of the law in all things, and which, in truth, *he* only could fulfil. The nature of this ordinance, therefore, is extremely well adapted to ~~excite~~ serious recollection, and promote future caution, in all well-disposed Christians at this *particular* season, in that it alludes to the mortifying the sinful works of the flesh, and walking in *newness* of life.

But independent of the powerful influence which the *scriptural* history of this day is calculated to effect upon every devout mind, and true follower of Jesus Christ, there is no season, my friends, in which we can more suitably employ the proper meditations which this awakening text directs, than on the return of a NEW YEAR.—If it is a pious and useful habit *every night* to review the behaviour of the *past day*; to thank our heavenly Father for the undeserved mercies we have received at his hands; to implore our blessed Saviour to intercede for pardon for our *numerous* offences; and to petition further grace from the Holy Spirit to *renew* our nature, and assist us in the returning duties of the *morrow*; how needful is it, that we should bestow some serious

thoughts upon the past events of a *whole year*? Can the very *best* of us say, we have been sufficiently grateful for the continuance of our being; the success in our affairs; and the various deliverances and mercies we have received?—How negligent have we been of our religious duties, and yet spared to *repent*? How provoking in our *offences*, and yet not punished according to our *deserts*? How much nearer, some of us, to *eternity*, and yet not duly mindful of the *escape*? Who, is it that hath comforted us in our respective troubles, and sickness, and relieved us in extremity? Who, hath protected us from unforeseen accidents, and various *unknown* dangers? And above all, Who hath provided us with the many easy, and happy means of grace, by which to amend our ways, to train ourselves for unspeakable happiness, and to avoid the endless torments prepared for sinful, and unprofitable servants? To the divine Author of every good gift alone, we must acknowledge ourselves indebted for these numerous, and unmerited indulgencies. Alas, my brethren! who amongst us has been strictly mindful of his obligations for the *one*, or proportionally careful, to employ the assistance of the *other*?

On the just review, then, of this lapse of time, we can but condemn ourselves, as thoughtless, disobedient, sinful creatures; who have wasted a valuable portion of the most precious talent God *can* give us. TIME, my friends, is only truly precious, as it serves to fit us for ETERNITY. It is given us for that very *end*; if it does not contribute
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to make us wise unto salvation, it is as a jewel cast before swine. But to our shame and sorrow, we must confess, that further than it is engaged in *worldly matters*, this inestimable gift is often considered as a very *burthen*; there is nothing we more *abuse*; it is an alarming and interesting truth for those to weigh, who do not sufficiently consider their *latter end*, that a day may come, unless they are earnest to *redeem* the time, when they will so fully see the value of this article, that if they possessed the riches of the globe, they would gladly give them *all* to purchase *one single hour*. Why then, should we be so infatuated, as to devote so much of it to the providing things, which one day will prove entirely useless to us, and neglect the benefit of that leisure, which, if well improved, would yield us treasures that will *last for ever*?

That part of our time indeed, which is employed in the necessary concerns of life, we may humbly trust, is *safely* used at least, especially if our business be governed by upright principles: but even in our *temporal* affairs, if we do not keep in view the grand concern of our existence, neither our present good fortune; the satisfaction arising from our success; nor all our frugal cares, will ultimately yield more than a deceitful dream; and whatever enjoyment our industry, or our talents may at present produce, if we neglect the *one thing needful*, all the rest will prove incapable of affording us one moment's happiness, when *time is at an end*.——

Granting, therefore, that men may lawfully give up a needful portion of their lives, in acquiring

arts and trades, in fitting themselves for the various professions and callings of this active scene, and afterwards, in reasonable provisions for their families, and dependants; yet no one will deny, but that the most busy have a considerable quantity of time to *spare*, and if they have any *religious* principle *alive* in them, they must know, that for *that* they will be accountable to God, as well as for the honest management of their common affairs. The question therefore is, how they employ *that time*?

It would be useless, in such a community as *ours*, (composed of humble characters, who if they will live at all, cannot abuse so *much* of this rare talent as their superiors) to dwell *particularly*, on the scandalous and shocking practice of many in higher life, in this respect. When we consider the crime that thousands of this order, are guilty of, we can hardly think that they believe there is any *other* life but *this*. Either their notions of God, and heavenly happiness, must be most contradictory to the real nature of each, or we must conclude them dead to all sense of a *purser*, and more perfect state of being, hereafter. They are so blinded and deluded by the false and fleeting pleasures of *this* state, that they think of nothing *less*, than *setting their affections on things above*, and their improper love of the world renders them at enmity with God. And what is the *present* consequence of this their mad devotion to all these vanities? Why, as it is impossible that the strength and spirits of man, can support the continual round of riot, excess, or even the weight of *business*, in which numbers are engaged,

gaged, they are compelled to sacrifice a considerable share of their time, to rest and sloth. They profanely overturn the very order of nature; they change day into night; they revel and indulge in sensuality during the appointed season of general repose, and shut out the blessed light of the sun, while they consume their hours in broken and forbidden slumbers. This indeed, is only a slight sketch of the manner in which *this* portion of mankind persist in murdering time, but it is enough to make us tremble for their fate.

On the other hand, it is no less certain, that the *lower* orders of society, though (as I before observed,) their very situation denies them so *full* an opportunity of transgressing in this respect, may yet do it as *effectually*, to the ruin of *their souls*, as the most wealthy of their superiors: and as it is to *such* I now address myself, to *their* condition it behoves me, chiefly to confine my admonitions and remarks.

It is an argument, my brethren, which the most ignorant amongst you will readily admit, that if it is the utmost wisdom for all mankind to turn their *leisure time* to the very best accounts, it must be doubly sinful to *misemploy that* time, and *dishonor* those seasons, which remind us more especially, of the only *end* of our coming into the world; of the *value of life*, and the *use* to which it is expected we should appropriate every *hour* we have to spare, from the unavoidable business of our respective stations. There is an extraordinary call upon *us*, my friends, at *this particular* season of the year, to



A SERMON FOR

consider seriously the meaning of the text, and to prepare for that *night when no man can work*. First, as we are entering upon a *new year* of our lives; and secondly, as you have been so very lately instructed in the nature of the blessed festival of our Saviour's birth. And most highly necessary is such instruction, when people are so shamefully and deplorably ignorant of the plainest articles of Christian knowledge, as most viciously to abuse the design of those holy ordinances, and perversely neglect every happy opportunity of gaining Christian information. If people did but wisely weigh the chief design of Christ's taking our nature upon him, they would soon be brought to see the absolute *necessity of working while it is day*: for one grand use of our blessed Lord having condescended to such an humble state, was purposely to leave his followers, and all the world, a profitable example how to conduct their lives.—The Apostle admonishes us *to pass the time of our sojourning here, in fear*, and he gives a plain, and most persuasive reason to induce us to follow his advice, *because* (says he) *we have no continuing city, but do seek one to come*. Now, my brethren, if we truly believed, both what our Saviour and his Apostles taught and practised for our *imitation*, we should be afraid of nothing more, than of *wasting time*. It may not possibly be in our power always to do what we would exactly *wish* to do, but we may always act according to what is *immediately* proper to our condition, as *men* and *christians*; and in this we may take the safest consolation, that a faithful, and prudent discharge of
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of the duties incumbent on us, in those characters, will ever be well pleasing to the Most High.

But to be more *particular*. At this solemn season of the year, most of the lower class of people are indulged by custom, in a more than ordinary share of leisure from the exercise of their several employments; it is throughout the Christian world considered properly, as a season of *rejoicing*, but surely, my brethren, it requires but little knowledge to understand what *kind* of joy should mark the conduct of all who have any notion of the value of their *souls*. The Apostle's exhortation is, *Let us do good while we have time*, and the admonition in my text holds out the strongest motive to enforce it: for *the night cometh when no man can work*.—But alas, my friends, how melancholy is the opposite fact? how scandalous is the deportment of many who would be thought *Christians*, while they disgrace the name in the grossest manner, by their licentious practices; and who sadly prove, that they have no just sense of the important blessing of *time*, by the various sinful methods in which they consume it. O, how low must many rate their vain pretensions to Christianity, were they to compare their thoughtless, and frequent profane behaviour, upon the return of this happy, but serious season, to the religious habits of the earliest Christian ages? Doubtless even *then*, the labourer occasionally rested from his daily toil, to celebrate the remembrance of *those glad tidings of great joy to all nations*. Doubtless, people seized this pleasing opportunity of visiting their friends, from whom the stated labours of their

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their calling, had kept them strangers for many months together. But in what *manner* can we suppose, (with any degree of reason or propriety,) that they passed their time on those occasions? Surely not in dissoluteness, and debauchery! not in defying the laws of God and man! One principal employment we may conclude was, the natural congratulation of each other on the blessed history of their Redeemer's birth, and life; *they gave glory to God on high, that he had sent peace on earth*, and declared in so wonderful, and merciful a manner, *his entire good will to man*. That they made merry, we may well imagine, but their mirth was qualified by *wisdom, gratitude, and duty*. Part of their rest from labour, was taken up in comforting themselves, that though for the punishment of the *first* man's disobedience, *they were sentenced to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow*; yet by the birth of the *second* Adam, the curse should not be *lasting*. The poor, consoled each other, that their *Saviour* was *born poor*, and *lived poor*, in order to set them a pattern of *contentment*, and due submission to the will of Providence; to encourage them by his example, that when they had discharged the work appointed for their *trial*, they should be rewarded past all expression, and received into glory, to share the price of their Redeemer's labors for them. They who were in sickness, or affliction, partook no less in the general cause of joy, reflecting that this season renewed the happy remembrance of their DELIVERER, who was exposed to sorrow, suffering, and all manner of ill-treatment, yet patiently endured the
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the various miseries of human nature, and even death, that in due time *all tears should be wiped from their eyes*.—The *higher orders*, no doubt, expressed *their* joy in pious exultation, that they were endued with power of resisting the dangerous temptations to which their more *hazardous* state exposed them, and in celebrating *his* praise, who had left on record, the supporting *hope*, that it was not *impossible*, that *the rich should enter into the kingdom of God*, however *hard* the struggle might be to *many*. They rejoiced that He lived, and died, to *make this possible*. And they demonstrated their joy by the actual *fruits* of such a faith. They considered themselves as *stewards* only, of the good things allotted to them in this life, and the cheering influence of their mirth and hospitality, extended to the increase of *that* festivity, which their poorer brethren could not indulge *without* it. Such considerate conduct of both high and low, did *honor* to the returns of this glad season. The rich, were grateful to God, and benevolent towards their brethren; the poor, were cheerful and contented; and while both were under the direction of such cautious principles, it is not likely *either* would disgracefully mispend their common time, much less dishonor the season of *extraordinary solemnity*.

From this short view of the method in which we may conclude the earliest ages of christianity *passed the time of their sojourning here on earth*, we will proceed to consider, the shameful and alarming alteration of the general manners in the *present* day. From the melancholy deadness of the multitude

tude to any thing truly serious, and notwithstanding all the means afforded, and the pains employed, to rouse them to a sense of danger, flowing from the habitual profligacy of their lives: from the total neglect of every holy custom, and the unfeeling perseverance in every indecent violation of religious order, we may begin to fear, with truth, that the period of that prophecy is drawing near, which our blessed Lord expressed in these alarming words, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?* The scandalous contempt with which too many treat the remembrance of his *first* coming, argues just doubt, whether they ever think at all of his *second*, and far more serious advent. As we are now celebrating a season that should urge us to adopt a holy course of life, it may help the object of this instruction, to take a short and candid examination of the common standard of christian faith, and practice, of this very place in which we live. Perhaps it may please God to open the ears and eyes, of the spiritually deaf, and blind, when their dangerous negligence is loudly sounded, and the picture of their shame, placed full before them. In truth, my brethren, it behoves the very *best* of us to prove ourselves at *all times*, whether we be in the faith, and, as the answer of our conscience speaks, to hasten and correct, or to improve our state. “If Christ then should *now* come, would he find faith in us? What fruits of faith have we to *shew*?” For our Lord’s assurance is, that *by their fruits ye shall know them*. How few of you are there, who truly look upon this life, only as a passage to a better?

Alas,

Alas, if you *did*, would you not make some *preparation* for it? Can any person, possessing a just sense of what must come hereafter upon the ungodly, forbear being shocked to view the brutal conduct of numbers of their fellow creatures, abusing the leisure now afforded them, in the indulgence of every kind of *vice*? consuming their time and money in rendering themselves much filthier than the very brutes that perish; disordering the noblest faculty of their nature, (reason) so as to be lost to every sense of decency, and moral government; nay, hazarding their very lives, in drunken broils, and starving their needy families, to surfeit their unruly appetites with liquor, which they can no longer *relish*? in short, they dishonor the very name of *men*. If the Savior of the world was now to come, could he call *such* his *faithful* servants? And can any thing be more terrible, than the certainty of what must be *their fate*? He would *cut them asunder*, and *appoint their portion with the hypocrites*. In truth, my brethren, all who thus foully abuse the season of their Redeemer's birth; all who wilfully refuse to know Christ *now*, depend upon it, He will not know them at the day of his appearing to judge the world. Hear his own words, *Depart from me ye cursed, for I know you not*. Can you refrain shuddering at this sentence, if you think at all? Your own *reason* must convince you of the *truth* of it, and of the necessity of the separation of the godly from the wicked. Ask yourselves this single, easy question: Would any man, possessing a grain of modesty, and good sense, be willing to be brought before an *earthly* supe-

superior when *intreated*, in order to recommend himself to any desirable favor, or protection? Would such a mad, and insolent project, deserve their *kindness*? Would it not be both defying their *authority*, and despising their *advice*? And think you, that the spotless Lamb of God, who lived an humble life, and died a miserable death; to procure you both means, and power, to overcome your vices, can possibly take pleasure in the polluted spirit of any sinful creature? Trust me, as sure as the Son of God exceeds the sons of men in purity, and perfection, so certain is it, that an habitual sinner will never be able to stand before the presence of God, and live. His sentence will be *eternal punishment*, an endless loss of every comfort; this the scripture terms the *second* death, and of which our *bodily* death, is but the *sign*, or *image*. *Be not deceived*, my brethren, *neither drunkards, nor whoremongers, nor liars, nor profane persons, shall enter into the kingdom of God*. These sinful characters form part of the black list which shall go to their *own* place, and live for ever, in misery unspeakable. Surely, then, it behoves men to strive to prevent so terrible a condition. It was the gracious design of the Blessed Jesus whom they so ungratefully affront, to rescue them *from* this danger; to provide a certain *remedy* for them, and *that* remedy is faith in his promises, and merits, and the grace of living up to his holy precepts. Let us pray, then, that we may never lose sight of the terrible consequence of falling from that faith; a consequence so truly dreadful, that it caused our blessed Lord to say, that
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for the sake of the elect, (that is, those chosen or preferred by God, on account of their humble, pious obedience, and dependence on Christ's atonement, so great and general is the depravity of human nature,) the time of their trial should be shortened. A most awful admonition to us all, and particularly to the hardened sinner, to work while it is day, since all experience shews the time must come, when no man can work. Almost every hour of our lives presents us with some awakening caution of our own sure fate; that our night is coming on apace. We need only look into the public prints, to see the rich, the powerful, the learned, the great of every description, all equally yielding to the undistinguishing shaft of death. And for all who have not died pure in faith, and rich in good works, either of active virtue, or deep and effectual repentance, how deplorable is the reflexion, of what must follow! What must become of those, who though professing Christ's religion, have yet not died in the Lord, nor enjoyed a reasonable hope in their Redeemer's merits? Now as every event in the design of Providence, tends to the good of those who are inclined to profit by it, so nothing is more calculated to awaken us than sickness and mortality. In every dying person, we see the very picture of what we must submit to; nor can I avoid observing, on this occasion, that the frequent and sudden instances of death around us, with the lingering, and alarming state of many of our fellow creatures, holds out a lesson of general, and useful warning to the thoughtless, and wilful sinner, to reform his wicked

wicked ways *immediately* *. Nay, it must engage even the *careful* christian, to examine *his* state, and prepare for the solemn summons. As to the *former*, who can consider *their* case but with the utmost horror! To be taken off suddenly, while in the full practice of every vicious habit, *thus* to appear before the Judge of dead and living, (for as we die, so shall we remain 'till the last day of account.) This is enough to rouse the most heedless sinner, and to make the stoutest offender tremble! For a most *fearful thing it is, to fall into the hands of the living God*, without an interest in the mediation of his eternal Son; and if through HIM alone, the *righteous can scarcely be saved*, where, oh where, shall *the ungodly, and the sinner appear*?

With this most awful impression upon your minds, I will now dismiss you; and having finished the general exhortation to *redeem the time*, and provide for *eternity*, I will defer the remaining arguments which should induce us to be more earnest in the work, till we meet again in the afternoon. In the mean time, may the Lord give us grace to think duly on the real state of our *hearts*, and to consider the manifold errors of our lives, that we may happily gain ground while it is day, and be ever prepared for that solemn night *wherein no man can work*.

* Preached during a very sickly season.

SERMON II.

FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY EVENING.

The same Text.

I CONCLUDED the *first* division of my discourse on these words, with the truly awakening consideration of the sinner's wretched portion in another state of being; a consideration, my brethren, that demands the utmost exertion of the pastoral office, in order to check the fatal prevalence of vicious inclination, in a depraved nature. Nor can it possibly be represented in *too high colours*; I shall therefore introduce the remaining part of the subject, with some further serious thoughts upon the fate of those who *live without God in the world*, and consequently devote themselves to the pursuits of sensual and sinful gratifications. To form a suitable sense of the tremendous sentence threatened by the God of truth against the wicked in the life to come, let us for once suppose (what is indeed impossible) that all that is past should be *forgiven* them, even *without repentance*, or *amendment*; still, every man of common sense must see, that to be at *ease*, and *happy*, in any particular state, a becoming *preparation* is positively necessary. I will propose a *very plain case* for your conviction on this subject.

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Supposing

Supposing any poor man amongst you was instantly summoned to appear before his *sovereign*, and all his nobles and learned judges, for the purpose of conferring upon him the *utmost degree of happiness* he could *wish*, but upon this *condition only*, that he was in some good measure *capable* of entering into, and enjoying all the various subjects of their elegant, and accomplished conversation, and of behaving with the *propriety* and *ease* of these his new companions. Were this the case of any of the description I have named, surely he would find himself in a most *awkward situation*; he would be far from happy; and with the prospect of so many desirable *promises* and *possessions*, he could not but lament most deeply, that he had not *before* been regularly *prepared* to relish this *new condition*, especially if frequent opportunities had been afforded him to render himself at least, an object of kind regard, instead of their disgust, but which he had constantly and wilfully neglected. In short, you must acknowledge, that such a person, without some previous qualification, would justly forfeit all his *hopes*, and be most restless, while he staid among such very unequal companions. Let us now *apply* this. In like manner, be assured then, my brethren, whosoever goes hence without having procured the *wedding garment*, so necessary to equip him for the heavenly feast, *for the society of angels, and the souls of the just made perfect*, he will be as certainly shut out from being a proper guest above, (be his condition *now* either high or low, rich or poor) as the dirty, rude, and ignorant

ignorant clown, would be deservedly dismissed the presence of a royal court, or company, for venturing to appear so very ill accomplished for any favor or employment in such elevated stations.

Again, the *sinner* may judge of the *truth* of this, from the consciousness he feels when accidentally in the company of serious, and holy minded people; from the unwillingness he experiences on all occasions, to join in religious exercises, as also from his eagerness to be dismissed from them. These tests afford a sure answer to his own conscience, that a suitable *temper*, and *practice*, are indispensable to render religion pleasant even *here*; and consequently, if we are wholly averse and unaccustomed to godly thoughts and works at present, we shall prove much more unqualified for the perfect enjoyment of all that is wise, and good hereafter; if we leave this world with our souls wrapped up in every thing else but that which *alone* is necessary to prepare us for the happiness of heaven. Here, then, while in the body, we are to fit ourselves for the more perfect state, for which we were at first created, and which God in mercy still designs us when we die, provided we employ the *means* his gracious goodness has contrived to bring us thither. And well may all who have never practised, or considered the necessity of this preparation, lament in bitterness of soul, when they come to die, what will become of them, or what they shall do in *another world*. Be advised then, my friends, in time; *strive to work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.*

Now the most wary christian living, is equally interested in this caution ; and it will greatly profit him to attend to the affecting scenes of decaying nature, which daily and hourly present themselves for his instruction. The full and regular exercise of our christian faith, my brethren, is what we all must mind alike ; and as it is highly proper that you should be prevented from living in a dangerous security, it is incumbent on *me* to point out to you, wherein that faith consists. Take notice, then, that it is not a *mere belief* that Jesus Christ came into the world on, or about this time ; or that he died to make satisfaction to God's justice for the creature's fall from original perfection ; nor even that this satisfaction (or the merits of his sacrifice) are all-sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world, (that is, for all them in it who have obtained an interest in the gospel covenant ;) for though all this *must be believed*, and is an essential *part* of faith, yet it is not the *whole* of it. *Free, saving faith*, includes the belief of the *entire gospel*, all the *conditions* of it, no less than the original *design* and cause of it : viz. the merciful good-will of God towards man, and the personal merits of the Redeemer.

What then, (may some enquire,) is a perfect, unfinning obedience still expected of the creature? No ; that is impossible, while in the body. We are *no longer under the law, but under grace*. The free mercy of God in Christ, has delivered us from the extreme rigour of the law ; the favor obtained for us, by the Redeemer's satisfaction, has covered us

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from the severity of *the hand-writing against us*. What, then, may *we sin that grace may abound?* God forbid! A sincere obedience is still required of us; we are to do every thing *faithfully*, which we find ourselves either *disposed*, or *enabled* to do. This necessary duty confirms the truth of its being *God who worketh in us both to will and to do*; and herein we plainly perceive the meaning of, *To him who bath, to him shall be given*. This entirely reconciles *free grace* with *free will*. By this, we shew that we believe the gospel, and that the spirit of it is *alive in us*. For, as the Apostle speaks, *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly*, neither is any one a Christian but he who is one *inwardly*; for the *circumcision* of the one, and the *baptism* of the other, must be something more than the *bare outward seal* of the covenant that men have entered into, or it will profit them nought. It must be the *change of heart* working through the spirit of the covenant, *and not in the letter only, whose praise is not of men, but of God*. Such a change, will promote a *patient continuance in well doing*, and thereby preparing them for glory, honor, and immortality, will assure their reaping the reward of eternal life. It is the effect of *this faith* which the Apostle, in another part of this chapter, (Rom. ii. 16.) styles *his Gospel*, by which God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, at the last day. This again, in Rom. xvi. 25. he calls *the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest by the scriptures of the Prophets, according*

ing to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith.

So that you see, according to the will of God ; the preaching of his Son Jesus Christ ; and the declaration of his Prophets and Apostles ; it is the *obedience* of the faith, that proves the *life* of faith. In *this* sense, it is most true, that *by faith alone* we are saved. *This* is the faith that justifies, and prepares us for a place in God's kingdom ; that faith in Christ, which guardeth from the *commission* of sin, as well as cleanseth from original, and inherent imperfection ; even such a faith (as before observed) which comprehends the whole design and spirit of the Gospel taken together, as *our rule of life now*, and the *seal* of our acceptance hereafter. For God *will render unto every man according to his deeds* ; and as for those *who obey not the truth, but follow after unrighteousness*, (let them believe what else they can) *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be their portion, as it will of every soul that doth evil.*

By this time, then, you must be sensible, my brethren, that it behoves us to examine closely, the *nature* of our faith, and not to be puffed up with false security. And if we do this as we ought, the consequence will naturally be such *confession* and *humility*, as will in time bring forth the genuine fruits of the spirit. To this good end, the truly contrite christian, will occasionally try the progress of this state by some such short examinations as these following :—“ Do I sufficiently believe, that in
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every particular respect which the wisdom of God sees *best* for me, *I must suffer with Jesus Christ, before I can reign with him?* Have I fully considered this world, as it is a state of *trial*, and a deceitful appearance, as to any real good, and death as the entrance into lasting happiness? Do I live by faith? that is, Do the promises and threatenings of the Gospel work upon my mind, to obey God, and avoid evil? or am I no farther convinced by it of the truth, than to hold the truth in unrighteousness; that is, while I *believe* the *facts* of the Gospel, to live in *contradiction* to all its holy rules? Has this faith produced in me such a constant care for my eternal interest, as to render me *fond* of the truths it holds out to me? Have I been as earnest to nourish, or supply my soul with holy exercises, as to support my body by proper food? Have I made it a constant custom to see all things in the light of faith? in other words, to long after the invisible things it promises, and to set my affections more on things above, than on the things of this world? Have I corrected all my opinions by this rule, and used it as a never-failing guide in the midst of all the darkness of my mind?" Whatever serious christian will venture to try himself by this enquiry, he will readily discover all his *wants*, and how far the spirit of Christ hath really wrought upon *his* spirit; how truly he may be said to *live* in the Lord, and consequently, what share of hope he has of *dying* in the Lord. Such an examination will render him both grateful and humble: in whatever degree he has advanced, he will place all

to the glory of God ; and wherever he is deficient, he will cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. In this manner will every rational Christian keep trimming his lamp, 'till the Lord shall please to call him to the wedding supper ; and if he is found *watching*, the Master is faithful, and will admit him into his rest. Some such frequent trial (depend upon it, my brethren) is needful for the *best* to use, to keep the work of faith alive within them, and to avoid sinking into a dangerous security, the dreadful effect of unsound principles. Now if the *best* need this, what judgment can we reasonably form of the generality of those called Christians ? Alas ! the greater part of them thus named, if we judge (as we justly may) of their *faith* by their *practice*, we must pronounce to have no saving faith *at all*.

What remains to complete my present exhortation is, to submit to your further consideration a few words of *advice*, particularly adapted to our entering upon *another* year of our lives ; and with which (as at first proposed) I shall conclude my discourse.

All persons then, who are truly sensible of the *uncertainty* of life, will naturally wish to *redeem the time* ; and the only way to do *that*, is to repent most heartily of our past sins and failings, and to use every possible method of improving the *present* time, that we may have less to lament, should we be spared to *another* year, than we have for *that*, which we can *never recall*. Now the shortest and plainest method of effecting this, is to propose to ourselves a few articles of *general* enquiry, both concerning
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our transgressions of every kind and degree, as likewise respecting the state of our advancement in different duties ; and then to lay down some form of pious resolution for our future conduct, and watch and pray, that we may be faithful in the discharge of it.

1. Can any among you safely say, that you have humbly lived up to that measure of light God has already given you ? Have you diligently employed all the various means of grace He has appointed for your spiritual instruction and improvement ? On the contrary, Have you not, in many instances, transgressed against the dictates of your own conscience, and wilfully slighted abundant opportunities of acquiring religious information, and being taught how to grow better ? All who stand thus condemned, must confess their ungrateful negligence, and strive to amend it with the utmost care. Further, I would wish you to remember, upon this particular head, the force of the following maxim ; “ that to neglect the *means* of grace, and to trust to a slothful dependence upon God’s *favor*, is wilfully to *tempt* God.” (2.) After *confessing* our manifold sins, negligences, and ignorances, which every real Christian must be sensible is one positive condition of their forgiveness, the next wise measure will be, to begin a regular endeavor (attended with constant application to God for help) to *repair the fault*. One very profitable expedient to this end, and which I have frequently proposed and enforced from this place, at this returning season, is, to fix on some actual work of Christian

Christian advancement, and pursue it with steadfast and pious zeal.

In my *publick* capacity, I have endeavoured to set you an humble *example* of this nature, by fixing upon different modes of general improvement in Christian knowledge, delivered *weekly* for *some years past*. And though few, *comparatively*, have judged it needful to attend, yet the endeavour, I hope, will not be *wholly* thrown away on others. The first year I delivered a course of lectures on the *Church Catechism*; the next, a plain exposition of the *New Testament*; and *this* year, I purpose (with God's blessing) to give you, every Friday evening, a full and scriptural exposition of our whole *Book of Common Prayer*. In this undertaking I hope to convey, to every attentive and steady member of our Church, such a share of useful information as the present times seem *greatly* to require, when the minds of the people are daily weaning from their esteem of our pious establishment, through *ignorance*, or the artful delusion of its enemies. These tasks, humble and imperfect, as I am very conscious they are in *themselves*, I can assure you, have occasionally afforded myself considerable relief of conscience; and I am thereby so convinced of the value of this general plan I am recommending, for the practice of each private person in the congregation, that I may safely pronounce, if every one of you had adopted it with vigour, and steadily improved it, from the beginning of every year, since you have been accountable to God for the abuse of his ordinances, and the violation of his commandments,

mandments, unavoidable advancement must have been made both in religious knowledge and Christian practice. How easy should we have gradually found the exercise of piety, and all good works, from which many of us continue so lamentably averse, and which remain still to be learnt and practised, or they can never expect God's favor now, or the enjoyment of heaven hereafter? If all, I say, my brethren, who *call* themselves Christians, had determined, on entering another year of their lives, to forsake some darling sin, and begin some virtuous course of action; to correct some religious neglect, and to obey some positive precept of God's law; O, what a blessed change should we have witnessed in each other, even during the short period of our acquaintance! Now the necessity of the rule will appear yet stronger, when we reflect, that none can plead ignorance of their many and grievous errors, or want of *means* and *power* (if duly used and asked) to enable them to apply the *remedy*. Permit me to give you an instance in both kinds, which, if you have grace to attend to, will doubtless prove, by your own inward peace, the truth of my remarks. First, Let all who are conscious of their remissness as to the *means*, become more constant in attending upon divine service, and in paying a most *religious veneration* to the sabbath-day *particularly*, and all the duties of it. If people duly considered to *whose* house they were coming, and into whose *presence* they were approaching, before they set out to come to *church*, it could not fail to effect a *more early*, and *decent attendance* there, than many,

many, either from ignorance, and gross stupidity, or unhappy total want of thought, are frequently apt to discover. It is extremely injurious to the public solemnity of divine worship, and no less so to the spirit of *private* devotion, to be neglectful in this respect. *Calmness* and *composure*, is the proper preparation for *religious* employment; *hurry* and *confusion* favour too much of selfish, worldly, and temporal zeal. Of such improper and blameable conduct, we may judge by the *different* behavior men shew to their *earthly superiors*, and the character it would deserve if practised towards them. If our neighbor invites us to a feast, and we come when it is *half over*, I need not tell any of you, what *censure* we should deserve in such a case. It would be a mark of gross contempt, and render us undeserving a second invitation. Thus we cannot be too careful of duly profiting by this, and every other orderly and convenient opportunity of increasing in faith and holiness; (*for faith cometh by hearing the word of God*) I say *convenient* and *orderly*, because I think it inexpedient and injudicious, to impose burthens we are not able to bear; and if we wilfully slight the regular, and wholesome provision our holy church hath made for our spiritual improvement, and depend on *other* methods of our *own invention*, it is to be feared we shall be found assuming an authority we cannot justify, upon the solid principles of *scriptural subordination*; (but this by the way.) One part of gross neglect as to public worship being corrected, a most valuable point will be gained indeed! (2.) I would most earnestly recommend the *general* exercise

exercise of FAMILY PRAYER in all your houses. I trust it has been sufficiently proved to you, in a little book I gave you some time back, that this is an *indispensable duty* in all Christians, and might be reduced to practice without the smallest *worldly* inconvenience, which is too common an excuse for the neglect of many pious exercises, that would happily fit us for the blessed work in which (if we are saved) we shall be employed to endless ages, when all our years shall have an end. Can a few minutes, twice a day, be thought too much to thank God for all his undeserved mercies, and crave his further care of you? but if it be too hard a task to read and learn such short addresses as may be used on this occasion, were you only to repeat the Lord's Prayer *regularly* and *devoutly*, with all your family and servants decently assembled, depend upon it, this pious habit would produce a wonderful effect both in your own minds, and those whose conduct is more directed by your example of every kind, than probably you are aware; and for whose misconduct, proceeding from any wilful neglect of positive duty, you certainly will be in some degree accountable.

How absurd and insufficient the excuses many make for this omission, might easily be proved, if time were allowed.

But after all that has been said, it will be sufficient at present to observe, that, as we are liable to ten thousand accidents; as the favor of the same all-powerful Being is equally at *all times* necessary for our preservation and success: in short, as in

the midst of life we are in death, it behoves us *always* to be upon our guard, and to accustom ourselves to *every preparation* for a better state, that in case of being called away, we may be *found watching*. But supposing we were even assured of a very long continuance on this scene of trial, is nothing due from *gratitude* for that life, and every other blessing we enjoy? Let me intreat you then, my brethren, to try the value of this Christian duty, and trust me, you will find it of considerable importance in forwarding the growth of many other graces. *What is pleasing to God must produce a good effect*. You are very sensible, that few of your humble dependants, either *can*, or *will* pray, if left to *themselves*; by this becoming custom, you will oblige them to some sort of acknowledgment of that glorious God, whom it is our greatest wisdom to fear and serve; you will remind them of their continual dependance upon *Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being*. In short, did no other benefit ensue, you will gain the important point of having your conscience free in this respect; you will have given this bounden mark of faithfulness in your calling, and veneration to the Most High, and one certain consequence will be, his favor to yourselves, and children.

To conclude. All who are happily enlightened Christians, cannot fail to feel the burthen of their sins, and the great necessity of daily progress in holiness of life. As for our *faults*, the very best must own they are *many in number, great against God, and grievous to ourselves*. As to our *virtues*, COM-
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PARATIVELY, they are as a grain of sand in proportion to our *offences*. PRAYER is the appointed means of procuring pardon for the *one*, and the increase of the *other*. It is the glorious privilege vouchsafed by a gracious God to frail and undeserving creatures, of pleading for the blessing of his promises, and conversing with their CREATOR. Our regular use of it is an essential mark of our *faith* in those promises; and is one condition on which they will be fulfilled. In proportion as we pray constantly, and sincerely, we may build a steadfast hope that we partake of the healing influence of God's good spirit; and that for this plain reason: it is impossible that we can possess any *real good* but what we have received, either *before*, or *after* the fall of our first parents. The *first* gift we know was *forfeited*. If then we have any *now*, it must be from a *renewed* power. Every good disposition or desire must necessarily proceed from God; from the operation of his Holy Spirit upon the mind; and it is equally true, that all men occasionally have experienced this in a sufficient measure to direct their ways. The doctrine of our church teaches us to believe this degree of grace to be communicated by virtue or through the means of a sacrament, and outward ordinance; and *first* bestowed at baptism. It matters little, whether in its primary state, you call it *conscience*, or *preventing grace*. The *latter*, is the more *scriptural term*, and more applicable to *Christians*. The *former* is the renewed light to all men *equally*, who will be judged according to that light, where more has not been dispensed. The Christian will
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undergo a *heavier* sentence, because the Gospel is calculated to *improve* him. This regenerating power then is that free gift of the Creator to his creatures, which *prevents* or goes before their actions; a principle that keeps them on their guard, and preserves them from the danger of temptation. The corrupt disposition of carnal nature (it is true) may oppose, stifle, and reject this degree of light or grace, as sad experience continually proves, by the perverse rebellion of the wicked; but that in no shape lessens God's merciful design in this most necessary provision. The peculiar work and duty of a Christian is, to *follow this light*; but (as just now observed) he will naturally feel a difficulty in himself to profit by it so as might be *wished*; he is therefore further directed (under the covenant in which he is engaged) to apply for strength to use it to his good; and that aid which he obtains by *prayer*, is properly distinguished by God's *assisting grace*. It is therefore evident, past all dispute, and level to every man's capacity, because it may be known by actual experience, that (as I before remarked) God doth hereby work essentially in us, both to will and do, and yet the *free agency* of the creature is necessary to discover the good effect in his own conduct: that is, God, by his *word*, his *ministers*, and your own *conscience* has rendered it decidedly clear, that it is sinful wilfully to run into *temptation*. Can any man without the utmost *falsehood* and blasphemy united, assert against this conviction, that he is *compelled* to be intemperate or profane. The evidence is so strong that no one
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can deny it. For, on the one hand, we see men continually yielding to iniquity because they will not apply for grace, or help; and, on the other, when they suffer themselves to be led by their divine Director, they can overcome the hardest trials to which a miserable nature is exposed. The force of these arguments then, my brethren, is designed to prove to you, that PRAYER is positively *essential*, as being the appointed method of obtaining what we need.

May we all become so sensible of these very plain and profitable truths, that henceforth we may never neglect any reasonable portion of our time, to implore God's grace to *strengthen* every pious resolution his Holy Spirit may suggest unto us. That we may *work the works of Him who sent us* into this world, *while it is day*, instead of yielding to those deadly works of the tempter, which must expose us to the final sentence of eternal darkness.

Let us be ruled by the Apostle's exhortation, (Rom. xii. 13.) *That knowing the time* (and as we may justly apply it, considering the serious end of this particular season) *it is now high time to awake out of sleep, because now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed.* We are nearer our death than when we were baptized, or first instructed in our duty. *The night is far spent* (the night of the soul in its prison of trial:) *The day is at hand* (the time of its freedom and refreshment.) *Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light:* (let us flee temptation, and implore the grace, of God.) And finally, the Apostle leads me to a

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conclusion highly applicable to the present time and purpose of my whole discourse. *Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus; that is, strive to imitate his character and example, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

Amen, through Jesus Christ, the Friend and Helper of all his humble, faithful followers; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit; be all power, praise, and glory for ever and ever.

SERMON III.

FOR THE THIRTIETH OF JANUARY.

~~MEMORABLE~~

1 PETER ii. 15, 16, 17.

For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.—As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king.

ONE hundred and forty five years are now elapsed, my brethren, since that memorable exertion of lawless power, which produced the shocking, and unprecedented event, the anniversary of which, we are assembled this day to commemorate, according to the pious order of our church.

When the wicked have dominion, we cannot be surprized at the dreadful effect of their councils. There is a fair field, it is true, afforded us this day, to enlarge upon the infamy of this most cruel tragedy! and if we were to yield to the full force of the natural indignation, which must arise in every humane mind, on contemplating the wickedness, and miseries of this horrid transaction, it would be an easy matter to fill you with abhorrence at the character, and proceedings of the age, which

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marked

marked this woefully dishonorable period of our history. But as no good can be derived from raking in the ashes of iniquity ; as several generations of men have passed since this event ; and God, in mercy, has followed this grievous visitation with the blessings of national unanimity, and prosperity ; as the contrivers and perpetrators of this outrageous violence, are gone to judgment, and the wounds of the land have been long since healed ; and particularly, as this is neither a proper *place*, or opportunity for *party dissertations*, or *political invectives*, I shall chiefly confine my remarks, (after a short and suitable introduction) to the examination, how far the instruction contained in the words of my text, is profitably applicable to the business of this day, and what religious improvement may be derived from them, to loyal subjects, obedient in all things to God's holy ordinances, for *conscience sake*.

As to those whose leisure, education, and station in life, afford them means to study, and judge of past historical events, and the several interesting revolutions of their native country, they are at liberty to form opinions as the light of nature, reason, and religion directs them to decide. All that I conceive necessary for *your* information on this occasion, or proper in *my capacity* to deliver, shall be comprized in as short a detail as possible. According to the regular method I usually follow in my discourses to you, on *stated seasons*, I shall be justified in affording you a general view of the act, on which account, the church requires this day to be solemnly observed. Many, in this humble congregation,

gregation, are probably ignorant of the leading circumstances of the whole transaction, and indeed from the ungrateful and irreligious conduct of a careless age, too many (neglecting any longer to pay the least respect to remembrance of any of God's former visitations, or deliverances) are consequently but lightly concerned about the appointments of the church and state, in these respects.

We may collect from the general history of mankind, that the cause of all worldly discord and national revolutions, originates in the imperfections and errors of human nature. There is no permanency in sublunary affairs. All states have ever had their gradual advancement to a certain pitch of perfection, and prosperity, and generally, from *that* period, have discovered a tendency to *decline*. Like the frame of the human body, however good the constitution, a seed of certain destruction doth often lurk in the nobler parts, which, in course of time, demolishes the whole fabric.

It seems to be in the order of divine Providence, that different forms of government should proceed under such natural and secondary influences, as supply a trial of national gratitude under *prosperity*: urge them to repentance and reformation, as their unmerited successes decrease; and thereby leave them, like individuals, just objects of punishment for the abuse of their respective advantages, and, in the end, accountable for their final misfortunes.

When contending principles have been long at work, either in the animal or political body, they usually terminate in some *sudden*, and terrible effect,

which brings on a crisis, frequently to the *dissolution*, but sometimes to the *purifying*, and *preserving*, of the disordered system. But though the Almighty Director, by his controuling power, can command ultimate good from present evil, yet the whole tenor of his positive precepts, condemns the commission of *direct transgression*, through a precarious or favorite prospect of *bettering* our situation in *any* shape.

The history of the unfortunate Prince whose martyrdom we celebrate this day, affords a very memorable example of the mixture of failing and virtue, which marks the character of the *best* of men, both in private, and public stations. The prejudices of his education, and the many difficulties he had to encounter, through the previous engagements of the preceding reign of his father, and in which he was encouraged to proceed, on the commendable principle of its being a *religious*, and *national* cause *, excite our generous pity for the severity of his fate, no less than our admiration, at the magnanimity of his deportment, when all was lost, and his high condition so degraded.

When we view him involved in a war without the adequate means of pursuing it; connected with obnoxious persons, whom early attachment had rendered it very difficult to desert; without able commanders to conduct his enterprizes; and harrassed by a rising, and popular faction, whose object was the total subversion of the established form of

* The war in favour of the prince Palatine.

government, in church, and state; and these growing misfortunes secretly and powerfully assisted by the insidious contrivance of a foreign enemy; when we reflect upon the further disadvantages he laboured under, from an alliance of the *tenderest tie*: whose *religious* tenets would naturally excite *suspensions*, and furnish the most malevolent suggestions, in a party so violently bigoted to a *contrary* persuasion; we cannot be surprized, that so many jarring interests, and discordant principles, should feed commotion, and supply a very arduous conflict for any one, beset by such variety of very critical, and perplexing circumstances.

Whatever might be the faults and errors of this Prince's temper, and political conduct, on one hand, or the laudable motives, and patriotic efforts of his opposers on the *other*, in the early stage of these affecting troubles, the event proved, past all contradiction, that the *latent* object of the *latter*, was directed by very different motives from *national happiness*, or *valuable reformation*. The most violent opposers of the reprobated mischief attending despotic power, at length discovered a desire of the most *lawless usurpations*, in their *own* conduct; and, under the pretence of correcting grievances, they entirely destroyed the constitution, depriving it of its *religion, parliament, and king*, and substituting in its stead, a government of *force*, commanded by an *usurper* and a *tyrant*: one who could vindicate the murder of his lawful sovereign, for having employed the precedents of the prerogative, but *himself* made no scruple entirely to remove the very

pillars of the state, and actually wished, and strove, to be elected to the *very office*, he before had pleaded *virtue* in *abolishing*. Such hypocrisy was greatly aggravated by the mask that covered its foul proceedings: viz. *purity of religion*, which was the ostensible motive for every act of violence.

It is no uncommon thing in every age, and quarter of the world, to read of the untimely fate of kings, through various plots, and meditated assaults, of implacable and ambitious enemies; but the execution of Charles the first, is the only instance we have on record in any christian country, of a sovereign being *formally* condemned, and *publicly* sacrificed by the *sentence of his subjects*. In those days, in truth, the deed was received with horror, and reprobach, by every other nation; but *recently*, the similar tragedy has been renewed in the untimely fate of a neighbouring monarch*: and it is very
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* Whatever has been here advanced in christian candour for the sufferings of this unfortunate prince, I would not be understood as such a bigot in his defence, or so blind to the blemishes of his character, as to pronounce him (as many have done) *immaculate*. Doubtless, there were many errors in his conduct, and *one*, so conspicuously exceptionable, that it will admit of *no extenuation*, whether in a political, or moral view. The sacrificing of his *friend*, evinced ingratitude, temerity, and weakness in the extreme. Here the king was guilty of a most *sinful* breach of his *prerogative*. Whatever might have followed, he should have resisted this temptation; and, indeed, nothing *worse* could possibly have been the consequence of his virtuous fortitude than what he afterwards experienced. But even this failure in magnanimity, foul as it was, served to make the future lustre of his good qualities still more brilliant; for is it possible to read this prince's penitent remorse, without much christian
pity

worthy observation, that the principles which actuated the prevailing party in the close of *our* civil wars, are perfectly congenial with the spirit that commenced, and still supports the french revolution. In *our* country these turbulent disturbers of the world's peace, were nominated INDEPENDANTS,

pity for his sufferings on this very account! It would take up too much room to transcribe *all* his pious lamentations for this unjustifiable act, but to evince the sincerity of his repentance for it, I will give you his own words in one of his secret acts of devotion. “ In-
 “ deed (says the afflicted monarch) I am so far from excusing, or
 “ denying the compliance, on my part, (for *full* consent it was not)
 “ to this nobleman's destruction, whom in my judgment I thought
 “ not by any clear law guilty of death, that I never felt any touch
 “ of conscience, with *greater regret*; which as a sign of my re-
 “ pentance, I have often with sorrow confessed, both to God, and
 “ man, as an act of *most sinful frailty*, as it discovered more a *fear*
 “ of man, than God, whose name and place on earth, no man is
 “ worthy to bear, who will avoid *inconveniencies of state*, by acts of
 “ *so high injustice* as no public convenience can *expiate* or *compensate*.

Vide King Charles's penitent Meditation on
 the Earl of Strafford's death.

Thus, in one sense, blood paid for blood, unjustly spilt. It is remarkable, that the late unfortunate Louis the sixteenth was also guilty of a very capital error, of which his conscience most sorely upbraided him at the *last*, as an act, according to the principles of his education, most highly culpable, and indefensible, as the guardian of the established rights of his clerical subjects, against whose lawful property he signed the confiscating decree. Thus we see both these high personages humbling themselves most sincerely for these unjustifiable proceedings, and respective unhappy errors. That such foul specks should appear in otherwise, such valuable characters, is melancholy to consider. We can only resolve them into the imperfections of human nature, overset by conflicting interests, and overpowered by most trying emergencies, and biased besides, perhaps, by artful and intriguing counsellors.

because

because they openly reprobated every kind of civil, or religious subordination, and maintained that all men, not only were equally qualified for the public exercises of the ministerial function, whether by prayer or exhortation, but also for venturing to assert, the justice of a fancied *equality*, to which all were *born alike*. To these succeeded a still more violent denomination of reformers, who styled themselves, with great propriety, **LEVELLERS**. They protested against all other governors but **CHRIST**, and declared that all ranks of men should be reduced, without exception, to *one degree*, and **EQUALITY** be universally acknowledged in *titles*, and *estates*. Now this is the very same description of insurgents, who have demolished all the ancient distinctions of society, in a neighbouring nation, and laid violent hands on every inheritance, and property possessed by any of superior orders. The *french* levellers, differ only in *this* particular, that instead of pretending to qualify their injurious plunders by the deceitful submission to *Christ alone*, they have actually renounced all manner of dependance on *that holy name*, and defend their tyrannical proceedings on the dictates of mere human reason, and avowed *infidelity*. At a time when so much iniquitous art is employed by the agents of these rebellious, and unnatural tyrants, to introduce the same miseries in this happy country, I judged it might not be unprofitable to give you a short character of the principles and practices of these *modern* republicans, as far as they agree with the fanatical projects of the deluded populace in *former* times, among ourselves.

From

From the peculiar manner of king Charles's death, and his fortitude in supporting the gross indignities inflicted on him, this ill fated Prince was called a *martyr*. The word implies a *witness* dying for the *truth* of any thing; in which sense, the Apostles, who laid down their lives in defence of Christianity, were styled *martyrs* to the cause of Christ their Master. And as the king would not acknowledge the authority of the tribunal which summoned him to *trial*, in that it was illegal, according to the established, and fundamental principles of the constitution, he therefore might be justly called the *martyr* of a cause, where the rights of *parliament*, the *religion* of the *country*, and the life of its *chief magistrate*, were at stake, and overset by an armed force, and lawless power.

From the retrospect to these sad times in our *own* country, and the deluge of misery which at present overwhelms the french people, we are taught some *very useful lessons*. First, to cultivate moderation in our principles, and conduct, and to be gratefully content, with the benefits and blessings we enjoy: secondly, to learn wisdom from the calamitous circumstances attending both these dire events, which prove the fatal consequences that ever have attended a *military democracy*; a form of government that necessarily must abound in *cruelty*, and *injustice*.

Tyranny of any kind, is insupportable to human nature, but every person of unprejudiced judgment, and peaceable disposition, will readily allow, that a limited power in ONE, must be less dangerous to the real blessings of general liberty, than an uncontrollable

troublesome authority in *numbers*. Nay the evil of an absolute monarchy, doth not extend its injurious influence, so universally and severely, as when despotism is thus *distributed*, and delegated to *censure*, *arrest*, and *judge*, as *private opinion*, and perhaps *self interest*, shall determine needful. When the interests of *all* are actually united against one individual, it is an easy matter to check, and prevent any threatening mischief, but when judicial power is exercised at the discretion of the several members of an unsettled government, oppression may reach to the obscurest corner, triumph over the most innocent, and spread all the horrors of tyranny throughout a country. Of this we have indisputable proof in the nature of the present government in France. Every member of the convention is a *despot*; every commissioner, or deputy from that body, has unlimited power to exercise his will upon all, and every thing, he pronounces necessary for the benefit of the community at large. In the boasted cause of *liberty*, or with the ensnaring promise of *equality*, men are compelled, or tempted, to quit every thing most dear to them, and hazard their own lives in the destruction of their countrymen. They are hardened to scenes of the greatest cruelty, and injustice, and are only prevented from wresting the power out of the hands of their employers, by a policy founded on conscious timidity, and crime, and at once the most ungrateful, and barbarous, that was ever regularly practised: viz. the immediate destruction of a commander, whether unsuccessful through misfortune, or from his valour likely to

become popular, and dangerous of course, to the prevailing faction of the day.

Who can avoid perceiving what opportunities of violence are afforded to turbulent and prejudiced minds, intrusted with such authority? God forbid, we should ever experience *such* a test of liberty in *our land*! It must be considered by every man in his senses, as the most grievous visitation of the divine displeasure, instead of the blessing many would madly promise from it. I require you only to examine the various exertions of this species of power in different parts of France, to judge of the truth and misery of this representation.

Thus have I afforded you a sketch of the times when this unprecedented, and afflicting event took place; as likewise of the present troubles in a neighbouring nation, that we may take warning by their distress, and not provoke a similar chastisement of *our* sins. Upon the whole, though doubtless, one ostensible cause of the extremity to which measures were urged in former days, might be an injudicious exaction of ancient laws, and precedents, opposing the favorite opinions connected with certain religious tenets, which were beginning to prevail in this country, about that period, and which were imported from government's possessing those peculiar principles; though these, I say, might unite to produce the *secondary* causes of all the future contests and distractions in this country; yet, after all, we must ever resolve events of such tremendous consequence into the will of the Supreme Director. We cannot but view them as
engines

engines of his *displeasure*; as awakening chastisements for the ungrateful provocations of an iniquitous people: and such awful visitations should terribly warn us to correct our manifold and heavy trespasses against our heavenly Benefactor; to deplore our sins of omission, and commission, and lead us to a becoming sense of the rich, the various, and the unmerited blessings *we still* enjoy.

In *this obscure* corner of the kingdom, I shall hardly risk censure (as aiming at court favor) if I mention *one essential* instance of our national happiness. The virtuous and exemplary character of the Prince that fills the throne of this realm, evinces the favor of Heaven towards us, in an *eminent degree*. I need not quote scripture to prove the value of such a blessing to *any* people; I trust all present are possessed of sufficiently grateful and loyal sentiments to acknowledge it of their own accord. It is a maxim in our political system, “that the King can do no wrong;” but it is a still more glorious eulogium of his exalted station, to affirm with truth, that our gracious Sovereign *wishes* none. This is a fact that universal testimony must establish; and we may safely add, that since the reign of Edward the Sixth (of pious memory), no Sovereign of these kingdoms has ever been more exemplary in every article that *ought* to attach respect from a loyal, flourishing, and Christian people; and as is his *due*, and our bounden *duty*, towards *none*, have hitherto, more frequent, and distinguished proofs been given of general, and unfeigned affection.— Let us be firm in cherishing all becoming allegiance to

to our Prince, and obedience to the laws of the land, and those appointed to dispense them.—Let us be unanimous among *ourselves*, and faithful in our *respective stations*, and with the blessing of God we shall be able to defy *all foreign opposition*, or *intestine discord*. It is long, now, since the just prerogative of the crown, and the indisputable rights of the people, have been so accurately ascertained, as happily to prevent such fatal jealousies, as heretofore have sown the seeds of popular fury, and fermented public animosity throughout the land. We have nothing to fear in *this* reign, but the effect of our *private*, and *public vices*. Licentiousness, and extravagance, have always produced abundant and dangerous votaries for innovation, and disorder, in all states. Let us beware lest, being full, we grow remiss in religious concerns, and forget the God who has so long distinguished us by every species of prosperity, and comfort. If *we* are not a *free* people in every valuable sense of the expression, both *civil* and *religious*, there exists no such state on earth. We do not boast a merit indeed, in the *liberty* of *robbing* and *murdering* one another with *impunity*: but we are free to all the valuable purposes of *human happiness*. In full conviction, therefore, of this important, and indisputable privilege of Christian subjects, I shall close my present address, with such a suitable *application* from the words of St. Peter, which I have fixed upon to direct our duty as members of Christ's true Church, as will sufficiently inform, and guard us in a right course of conduct, and furnish some profitable points

points for your remembrance on this particular occasion. And these I shall render as short as possible, having extended, in the historical part of my discourse, beyond my first intention.

The will of God is, (saith the Apostle) that by well doing we should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. We must take one thing for *granted*, my brethren, in this exhortation, and which indeed no Christian *can deny*; and that is, that they are *foolish*, and consequently *ignorant* men, who reject the precepts and authority of divine Revelation; or, as it is most truly called, the *will of God*. Now the will of God is expressly declared, in abundant passages of the records concerning it, that respecting our behavior as a *Christian* people, we should *be subject to the higher powers, not only for peace, but also for conscience-sake*. You must plainly perceive, therefore, that it can never be consistent with this precept, that men should exert their ingenuity, and abuse their talents, in *stirring up strife*, and embroiling the country to which they belong. On the contrary, *by well doing*, that is, by being obedient to God's word in all Christian humility, forbearance, and good works, we are to put to silence the vain arguments of such restless and ignorant men as despise those injunctions of holy writ, because they will not believe, nor be led by them; and most *desperately* foolish must all such be, since the scriptures contain nothing but what is consummate wisdom, and calculated for man's greatest happiness, both in time, and eternity.

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Further; we learn from the Apostle's exhortation in this passage, that it is the *will of God* we should be *free*; but at the same time, we are not to *use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness*: not to make *religion* a mask, or covering, of every thing most *opposite* to its *genuine spirit*. If, therefore, we try the transactions of those former unhappy times, and the conduct of the actors on the stage of political affairs, by the strict principles of *this rule*, I think it will appear, that though our country had certainly a right to maintain its Christian privileges as a free state, yet the men who pretended to the *most purity* in those days, did not employ their *liberty* of debate entirely as the *servants of God* should do, and *with no maliciousness*, but on the contrary, the pages of history most dreadfully inform us, of much private rancour, and ambition in their designs, instead of proving themselves *true servants of God*; which only can be testified, by universal charity and good will; by the love of peace, and holiness of life, and conversation. Again: we may next inquire, whether they were more remarkable *for honoring all men*, that is, for paying respect to those *to whom honor, and tribute, to whom tribute is due*? If this had been the case; rather than have encouraged rebellion against their lawful Sovereign, and thereby involved the land in all the horrors of a civil war, they would have exercised the *moderation* which will ever mark the *strictly* Christian character, and employed the several happy means which human wisdom would have dictated, to accommodate the threatening opposition between

Prerogative and Privilege. Further; surely they could not be said *to love the brotherhood*, when they persecuted bitterly all those who differed from them, (not allowing even for mutual prejudice of education;) whereas, had a *Christian* spirit prevailed amongst them, it would have constrained them to be *gentle*, and *forgiving to others*, on the same principle they would *themselves* have wished to be considered, if at the mercy of a *superior power*. Further; the *gospel* spirit, (which these men pretended zealously to imitate) extends even to the love of *enemies*; that is, to a *generous treatment* of them. Now those they persecuted unto *death*, could not be justly reckoned any *further such*, than as having naturally imbibed the principles of their *forefathers*, they were inclined to construe *their's*, the side of *truth*. The *other* side could have no *better* plea. And had the leaders of the Revolution, been actuated by *Christian* principles, it would have dictated that consistent usage of their brethren, which under similar influence, they would have looked for, had *their object* been defeated. From their very different conduct in neglecting this *prime* quality of Christian discipline, we may fairly and fully condemn them of not having the *fear of God before their eyes*; for none can be said to *fear God*, who in abundant instances, transgress those laws he hath presented to them in his holy volume, for the improvement of their virtue, and to recommend the imitation of that divine pattern, which the Redeemer hath set to all men; namely, that as a proof of their love to *Him*, they should *love one another*. For the certain
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consequence of *fearing God*, is avoiding all such violent measures as must inevitably *displease* him, and render us rather servants of *Belial*, than of *God*.

To conclude. It is almost superfluous to put the question, whether men of this description *honoured the King*, with which becoming duty the Apostle winds up his pastoral counsel to all who wish to testify their real love of *freedom*; that is, freedom from all iniquity, spiritual and temporal; freedom from a rebellious, vindictive spirit, and consequently, freedom from the rigour of the laws which such misconduct merits; in short, freedom from the load of sin and wretchedness, to which the yielding to the suggestions of the Evil Spirit, will always subject the ungodly.

To the *chief Magistrate* of any state, *honor* hath been always due, and paid, by every community, even of *barbarian*, much more of *civilized* policy. The office of a *King*, is that expressly mentioned in *this*, and many other parts of Holy Scripture, to which becoming reverence is to be paid; and for whom, *prayers and supplications are to be offered up*. And though through human fallibility, or the evil counsel of their ministers, their conduct should appear exceptionable, still I apprehend no precedent can be found in any *Christian* code; no positive law of covenanted justice, that can warrant the depriving them of *life*, and hastening their eternal sentence, by the partial decision of their subjects, upheld by lawless power. Let us then, my brethren, endeavor to shew our zeal for God's glory by an uniform obedience *to all his laws*, by sub-

mission under every trial, whether of a public, or domestic nature, remembering that we are sent into this world merely as probationers of subjection to his appointments; to perfect such a temper of humility, meekness, and forbearance; to obtain such a freedom from *licentiousness*, and *oppression* of every kind; and to follow those rules which his Gospel holds out for that *end*; that finally through this temporal discipline, we may arrive at the liberty of the Sons of God, and enjoy to all eternity, the recompence of our faithful observance of his Commandments. God grant, such salutary and bounden duties may continually mark the conduct of all present, by the grace, and for the sake of the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all praise and power, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON IV.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY.

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LUKE V. 35.

But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

IN these words, our Blessed Lord delivers a precept and sanction, for the humiliating exercises of abstinence, and self-denial. He intimates, that *both* would be profitable for his disciples, when left to *themselves*, in order to regulate their conduct, and remind them of their peculiar, and hazardous condition in this life. From the spirit of this text, I shall endeavour to establish the propriety, and benefit of such Christian discipline, as is calculated to expose and restrain all public acts of licentious indulgence, and likewise to recommend such vigilance, and self-denial in our *private* deportment, as may be instrumental in forming a proper frame of mind, thoroughly prepared to holy meditations, and good works.

The particular method I shall take for your spiritual improvement on this occasion, will be—First, to afford you a plain account of the season we call *Lent*;

Secondly, I shall make some general observations on the nature, and end of the customs which prevailed in the first ages of the church, at this time ; And

Thirdly; I shall conclude, with an application to *ourselves*, as members of Christ's mystical body, that is, of a Christian church, or community.

Under the character of *Christians*, then, my brethren, it may assist your religious knowledge, and prepare your minds for suitable meditations, to be instructed in the history of this particular season, which the institutions of our church have set apart (in imitation of the most pious times) for the exercise of more than ordinary devotion.

We will begin with the general term by which this season is called, some among you, perhaps, not being acquainted with its *meaning*. LENT, is a word taken from the old saxon language, and signifies the *spring*, and was applied, to distinguish the fast which happens at this early, and advancing season of the year. It is contrived always to *begin*, so as to end at *Easter*. The use of this, is to put us in mind of our Blessed Saviour's *sufferings*, which ended at his *resurrection*. The custom of keeping this fast, is of the greatest antiquity; for, from the earliest ages of the church, it was usual for Christians to employ some set time for the purpose of *self-denial*, in order to prepare themselves for the feast of Easter. As to the *first* rise of it, it has been fully shewn, by learned and pious writers, that the *Christian* lent, was copied from the Jewish *preparation* to their yearly expiation. Now this expiation being a type, or figure of that

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GRAND ATONEMENT to be made by Christ, for the sins of the whole world, it was with the strictest propriety that the *followers* of Christ, should adopt a custom, which was ordained by God, to prefigure this wonderful, and glorious event.

At first, indeed, the *manner* of keeping this fast in point of *time*, was variously observed, but at length, it was fixed to the space of *forty days*; and that for these several valuable considerations: (1.) because the Jews solemn act of humbling themselves before the expiation just now mentioned, was confined to *forty days*; a number remarkably appropriated for repentance, and religious self-denial, on many accounts; for, not to mention the *forty days* in which God destroyed the old world, or the *forty years* in which the children of Israel did *penance* in the *wilderness*; or the *forty stripes* by which malefactors were to be corrected; if we only recollect, that Moses fasted that *particular number* of days, more than once; that Elias also fasted in the *wilderness* the *same* space of time; that the Ninevites had exactly as many days allowed *them* for their *repentance*; and, lastly, that our Blessed Lord himself, when he was pleased to fast, made choice of this *very number* of days: all these remarkable circumstances will afford sufficient warrant for this portion of time being allotted to an act of extraordinary humiliation.

Having informed you concerning the origin of the fast, and the reason of its stated time of continuance, I will proceed to the consideration of what relates to this particular *day*, and the usual employment of it. This, which is the *first* day in Lent,

and the *bead of the fast*, is commonly called *Ash-Wednesday*. The reason why we begin the fast on that day, is THIS: that whereas it was never the custom of the church to fast on *Sundays* (that day being kept in honor of so great a blessing as our Savior's resurrection) therefore, by opening the fast on this day, we gain just a sufficient number of days to make up for those *Sundays* which come between, in the course of the forty days; for if we take out, and allow for the six *Sundays* in Lent, on which we do not fast, for the reasons before mentioned, there will remain but thirty-six *FASTING* days, and consequently by beginning on a *Wednesday*, we make up the exact number of the forty days by the addition of these four days. The reason of its being called *Ash-Wednesday* proceeds from a solemn practice of the ancient discipline in the primitive church, which was as follows;

On the first day of Lent, all the penitents, that is, all those frail Christians who had fallen (in the course of the preceding year) into any scandalous offences, against the principles of their holy profession, (and being truly sorry for their sins, were desirous of making all due acknowledgment of their unworthiness to belong to Christ) were to present themselves before the Bishop, clothed in sackcloth, with their feet naked, and their eyes fixed on the ground. This was done in the presence of the principal clergy of the diocese, who were the judges of the sincerity of their repentance, by the terms of their confession. Thus were they presented by their Ministers, to the Bishop, who, with all the
truly

truly pious members of the church, were naturally affected at so awful a procession: for the returning sinner's consciousness of his ingratitude to his blessed Master, and dishonor of the holy cause, he had occasioned the enemies of christianity to blaspheme, made him willing to give this proof of his deep concern, and produced such unavoidable signs of unfeigned sorrow, as rendered the ceremony moving past description. The Bishop and the clergy then repeated the penitential Psalms, and, rising from their prayers, they sprinkled *ashes* on the penitent, covered their heads with sackcloth, and with mournful signs and language, declared to them, that as Adam was cast out of Paradise for wilful disobedience, so they, for a time, must be put out of the church of Christ. The Bishop then gave orders to the proper officers to shut the doors of the church against them, and all the clergy followed after, repeating this curse on Adam, *In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread*; by which they intimated to them, that while under this sentence, they must expect no other religious consolation, but what proceeded from penitential sorrow for their trespasses. The same penance was passed upon them, the next time the holy sacrament was administered, which was the Sunday following.

Now the use of all this, was to convince offenders, and all the members of the church, what great disorder, shame, and danger, was brought upon it, by such foul offences against Christian purity, and that they should entertain a proper sense and dread of such a punishment as gave trouble and uneasiness to

to all their Christian brethren, superiors, and relations, and for a time reduced themselves to a worse state than heathenism, being under sentence of condemnation, and excluded the benefits of all the outward means of grace.

Here then, my brethren, in this short history of the mode of doing penance in the primitive church, you have the reasons why the day is pointedly called *Ash-Wednesday*, which was derived from the humbling ceremony of sprinkling *ashes* on the heads of public penitents. A few suitable reflections may not be unprofitable on this occasion. It is impossible for any truly pious Christian not to observe, and lament, the *different* spirit of the times respecting the genuine sentiments of Christianity; for here, two valuable remarks present themselves. First, what a well grounded sense of their *Christian obligation*, the early members of the church possessed, who, though through the power of Satan over the weakness of nature, they had heavily transgressed their solemn vows at baptism; still, on being shewn the heinousness of their offence, and its consequent danger, they readily fled to the remedy appointed by their spiritual counsellors for their *recovery*. They *confessed*, and *bewailed* their faults, and solicited the form of public penance as the only *personal* atonement in their power, and thus setting an example to others, of the *necessity of repentance*, they confirmed their veneration for the church, and declared what a blessing, or a curse they judged it to be, *within*, or *out* of her communion. Secondly, the authority, respect, and useful consequence, of a diligent

a diligent ministry, is hereby established; and we discover likewise, the affectionate part the clergy, from the very highest, to the lowest, and all the congregation took in the solemn ceremony: duly jealous of the honor of their holy calling, they were ready to exercise that discipline, which might preserve its credit; and, at the same time, no less charitably disposed towards their offending brethren, (from a just sense of the disgrace of being under religious censure, and the misery to a Christian, to be deprived of the blessing of God's ordinances) they equally rejoiced to receive them into communion of the church *again*, as soon as they were convinced that they possessed a due respect for the character of its members.

The above discipline we will grant *severe*, but surely it was not heavier than the purity of those happy times made men to judge the nature of the offence; and the many good consequences attending it, shewed it worthy the imitation of every Christian age. All who are friends to the value of *order*, and ecclesiastical government, cannot fail to see how greatly we suffer for the WANT of it; since however evangelical a Christian's principles may be, unless they are blinded, and deluded, by extraordinary prejudice, they cannot deny, but every human endeavour, governed by a zeal for Christian purity, must be desirable, and truly useful, because it can alone proceed from the influence of that Good Spirit that would protect the church of Christ, and rule it in all godliness. Where there is no solemn public check to barefaced, and foul transgression, a general door is opened to acts of multiplied impurity,

rity, and licentiousness, which, gaining daily ground, through lack of discipline, level all distinction between good and bad, priest and people, and lower the valuable influence of ministerial exhortation and example. It is my humble judgment, therefore, that every wise, and sound friend of our establishment, must cordially lament that our church has not yet succeeded in restoring the exercise of such salutary, and holy discipline. As long as it continues to be neglected, so far as it might promote the honor of Christ's religion, it will prove a sword in our side, and help to provoke the vengeance of heaven to dispossess us ultimately, of an uniform, and Apostolical form of worship. All that our church at present supplies in general at this season, is the proper and suitable office of COMMINATION, or God's pointed threatenings against all wilful, and foul offenders.

I would not have you suppose, my brethren, because we have no such wholesome practice *now* amongst us, that these are private notions of my own. Hear, what one of the most pious Bishops * of our church has recorded on this very subject, and remember that the practice is sanctioned by holy scripture. " Church discipline (says he) is for the
 " honor of God, the safety of religion, the good
 " of sinners, and the public happiness; that Chris-
 " tians may not run headlong to ruin, without be-
 " ing made sensible of their danger; that others
 " may see and fear, and not go on presumptuously
 " in evil courses; that the house of God may not

* Bishop Wilson.

“ become

“ become a den of thieves, and that judgments
 “ may not be poured down upon the whole com-
 “ munity, for we know Achan committed sin,
 “ and wrath soon followed on the whole congre-
 “ gation.”

Let us hear the opinion of another divine, though *not* of our church, (true Christian sentiments upon any subject, being equally venerable and valuable, however *country*, or *education*, may distinguish the author *.) “ As discipline was neglected (says
 “ he) men’s manners grew more and more corrupt,
 “ even in the *purest* times. There were never more
 “ unbelievers converted, than when Christians were
 “ *catechized*, or strictly examined in the principles
 “ of their faith; and *baptized* Christians put to
 “ *open penance* for their sins.” Hear the *scripture*, on the subject; St. Paul exhorts, in 1 Tim. v. 20. *Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may* FEAR. Again, he tells us, that the very severest of all church discipline (excommunication) *is for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord*; that is, to mortify, and shame the corruption of carnal nature, lust, pride, and intemperance, a sure method to bring the sinner to reason, and repentance, and to lead him in the way of salvation.

But perhaps the objectors to discipline may observe, that this severity will scare, and discourage the ungodly from returning to their duty. Quite the contrary, is the truth. While a person is deter-

* Fleury.

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mined to *confine* a sinner, nothing will terrify him, to *hurt* him. If hearty *penitence* takes place, he is then in the hands of God, there can be no fear from the effects of public reproach, or the deepest contrition. It is a positive contradiction of cause and effect, to suppose it otherwise. For as I have already shewn, that the very act of true penance proceeds from inward conviction in the offender, and a *desire* to *reform* (and therefore in the primitive church penances were never granted but unto such as *desired* them, and wished to be *converted*) so it is certain, *forced* penances are seldom lasting; and one of the Fathers (St. Chrysostom) observes, that men should always be *persuaded*, not *compelled* to forsake their sins, because God rewards not those who, through *necessity* refrain from vice (that is, merely for selfish, or worldly reasons) but such as do it *freely*, from real *hatred* of them, and from hearty desire to become God's faithful servants. If it is further objected, that we are *all* sinners, and that to keep us within the bounds of Christian forbearance this advice presents itself, *He that is without sin amongst you, let him cast the first stone at the guilty*; and therefore it appears inconsistent to punish the vices of *some*, while others go quite unnoticed. We answer, that it is true, indeed, that we cannot be too charitable, that is, tender, sparing, and considerate, respecting our censure towards our fellow-creatures. This we admit as undeniable, concerning our *private* conduct towards each other, but it has nothing to do with our *public* character, as members of a Christian society, or with the positive

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office

office of a *minister*. It is certain, people may harbour in their hearts abundant evil principles, and passions, that will render them as incapable of a place in heaven, as though they had committed more *scandalous offences*, *pride*, *malice*, *envy*, *unjust designs*, *covetousness*, and want of *charity* are of this number; but none of these are objects of *general offences*, nor consequently of *public penance*; and however people may be corrupted by these tempers, and endanger their salvation by them, yet if they do not break the peace of society, nor disgrace the profession they belong to, by more profligate actions, doubtless there is a *distinction* to be made; *their business is* between God, and themselves. But in the case before us, the express words are, *whoremongers, drunkards, and adulterers God will judge*. And as to the office of *ministers*, the charge is no less positive, as may be seen in Ezekiel ii. 6, 7. *Son of man be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words. Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear*. In short, with regard to *ministers*, their *authority* is *necessary*, if it is at all necessary to preserve the *honor of religion*. The end of it, is to reform the wicked, and remove all barefaced scandals. And as to *true penitents*, they will always be ready to bear the shame of their sins, where the offence of them has been public, that they may escape the confusion of them hereafter.

It is certainly a great comfort to a faithful minister, to find himself obliged to use nothing but good advice, in order to caution against the general depravity

pravity of human nature : this is the mild, and easy part of his authority ; but if there is cause for *sharpness*, we see he is not to *forbear*. And when men will not take care of their *own* salvation, not to remind, and warn them of their sin, and danger, is by no means the character of a good *shepherd*, but of a *hireling*, who *careth not for the flock* : and every pastor who hopes to do his duty *effectually*, without rebuking the transgressors, will at last be found to deceive himself ; he may please *men*, but he must displease his Master who is in heaven.

Having now afforded you a short dissertation upon the history of this season, the value of church discipline, and the more immediate design of public penance ; since the temper of the times will no longer admit of this wholesome restraint upon the indecency of men's lives ; let us further proceed to *examine* the necessity of *another* kind of penance, which all who have the least pretensions to Christian character, *must* subscribe to, and that is *true repentance*, and *self-denial*.

In regard to *particular* offenders, this is the proper season to do penance upon *themselves* ; and as the penalty of *outward* penance, is not insisted on, but unhappily, quite out of fashion, people should be more minutely cautious, that their *inward* repentance is *sincere*. For a man may *see* his sin, *confess* it, and yet be a *false penitent*. Did not the traitor Judas do as much ? But the grand requisite of *saving* repentance, is the grace of God enabling us to behold the riches of his mercy unto truly humbled sinners. It is the *gift* of God, and this gift cometh

cometh by *prayer* and *fasting*. The perfect penance, which Christ requireth, (say the Homilies of our Church,) is composed of *deep sorrow for sin, confession, amendment* of former errors, and a careful obedience to the laws and will of God. Sin is the deadly distemper of men's souls. No diseases can be cured *instantly*, unless by *miracle*; and as no man is desperately wicked *all at once*, so neither, in the ordinary course of God's dealings with his creatures, do they *suddenly* become *saints*. Trust me, it will take *time* to root out evil habits, and deaden the sting of sin; it will need *time* also, to prove the virtue of good resolutions. Men may solemnly *profess* that they will repent, but they cannot be sure but that they lie unto God, until *continued fruit* establishes *sincerity*: and though some may call the *discipline* of the *church* *severe*, a man cannot be *too* severe against *himself*. To be ever ready to make excuses for human *weakness*, is to doubt the power of grace to amend, and will at last be found to strike at the very root of Christianity, which is founded upon eternal truth, not human policy, and ineffectual maxims. Instead of gaining, or securing the *faulty* by such indulgencies, depend upon it, it is the way to spoil and lose the *better* sort. Let no transgression, then, be satisfied with a hasty, short repentance, which seldom ends in purity of life; for he who fancies his habits will be effectually changed in a *moment*, will certainly deceive himself. *Regeneration*, and *growth* in grace, are two different things. It is true, a creature must be first *born*, before he can be said to *live*; but his being born, is

no security that he will arrive to *manhood*. It takes a long regular course both in *grace*, as well as *nature*, before a steady habit of pious principle is *establisbed*. The kingdom of God is *within* us, and that kingdom is justly likened, by the King himself, to a surprising increase of the smallest of all seeds. It must first be *planted*, then *watered*, *watched*, and *weeded*, if we can expect it to *extend its branches*; but as when a plant hath received a shock by negligence, the malice of an enemy, or any serious injury, it will then require *double diligence* to recruit its vigour, and restore its beauty, so is it with the returning sinner; redoubled industry will be necessary to repair his loss; he must water his couch with his tears, mortify, and subdue his passions, reproach, and accuse his *weakness*, encourage every kind of charity towards others, instead of vindicating himself by flattering *comparisons*; in short, he must *fast*, *pray*, and *condemn* himself, that his repentance may be accepted, and his offences blotted out. He must *judge himself, that he be not finally judged of the Lord*. This is the incumbent duty of every heinous sinner, at this particular season of humiliation. But *who* is not a grievous sinner at *heart*, and by *nature*, (further than the grace of God restrains him from atrocious crimes,) if he views himself aright? Are we not all become abominable and gone out of the way? There is none that doth good, no not one. The consideration of this melancholy state of fallen nature, leads me to the more particular application of my subject, and will furnish full and serious meditation for your instruc-

tion when we meet again. In the mean time, may we all find grace to digest what has now been offered for our direction in these truths. And being thoroughly convinced of our own manifold backslidings, may we seize the opportunity of this solemn season to prove, and punish, all our past omissions, and to refit our minds with holy resolutions, and substantial virtues. May God hear, and grant our necessary petitions, to this happy end, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Advocate and Redeemer.

SERMON V.

ASH-WEDNESDAY EVENING.

I COR. ix. 27.

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

THESE words of St. Paul, which I have chosen for the subject of your instruction this evening, may be thus interpreted: I submit to these restraints, lest by the indulgence of any of my bodily appetites, in matters that may seem *lawful*, in *themselves*, I may encourage desires, that lead to sinful, and forbidden courses. Temperance, and even abstinence therefore, are absolutely necessary to reclaim the evil disposition of my nature, lest I commit the very things I preach, or speak against, and thereby incur a double, and deserved punishment.

My discourse in the morning, my brethren, was rather an *introduction* to the subject which these texts enjoin us more particularly to consider at this time, than a regular comment upon their serious meaning. But according to the method I generally pursue, in my addresses to you upon stated occa-

sions, I judged it might be profitable to many, first to inform their *understanding*, respecting some particulars which distinguish this solemn season, in order to convince them of the importance of the appointment, and of the great benefit which may be derived to *all* Christians by a due observance of it. In the third division of this discourse, I promised to make a closer application of the subject to our *own case*. In order to do this effectually, I shall *first* inquire into the design, and *use* of religious abstinence, or that Christian duty which is commonly termed *fasting*; and secondly, after a few necessary remarks, I shall bring the expediency of the practice more home to ourselves, by a pointed appeal to the conscience, and experience, of every humble Christian.

There can be no doubt, but that it is the duty of weak, dependant Christians, *at all times* to watch over their ways with the utmost care, and to continue all possible methods of preparing themselves for the enjoyment of God's favor, and the improvement of those gracious motions which He freely communicates to the minds of all his creatures. In other words, it is our highest wisdom to preserve our *outward frame*, in all manner of temperance, and purity, that we may cultivate *a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man*. But as the very best, (who are careful to examine themselves as they ought to do) must still acknowledge, not only the *general* corruption of the world, but the deplorable weakness of their *own nature*; as they must be sensible how often they exceed the bounds

bounds of Christian duty, and how disinclined they are to check and cross their fleshly appetites, and fond desires, which continually tempt them to offend the laws intended to preserve them holy. This leads us to acknowledge the necessity of some stated times, on which to review the progress of our Christian lives, to examine the cause, and consequently of our respective failings; and to enter upon a course of strict, and humble repentance; and the benefit which may be derived from such a practice, cannot but be granted by all who seriously consider the grand end of human life, and the nature of its probationary state.

Now as every real Christian knows, that our chief happiness on this scene of trial, consists in so improving the various graces and opportunities God affords us, that we may not only shew forth the glory and goodness of the Creator *now*, but that we may be rendered capable of serving him for ever in a *perfect* state of being; all such, therefore, will gladly listen to a plain account of *one* of the scriptural methods, that is handed down to us, as calculated to help us forward in this good work.

“FASTING (says the pious Author* I often quote for your instruction) is necessary to bring our hearts to a penitent, holy, and devout temper, and to enable us the better to perform the Christian vows that are upon us: by fasting, alms, and prayer, we dedicate our bodies, goods, and souls to God, in the most especial manner.”

* Bishop Wilson.

It is not that the Almighty is pleased, or displeased, with what we barely eat, or drink, at one time, preferably to another, or whether we supply the necessary support of life by feeding upon *flesh*, or *fish*, or *vegetable* diet; nor can he be supposed to favor us the more, for starving or torturing our bodies, to the hazard of our health, for such extremes might help to deceive us on the *other* side; we should only be capable, by *such* a severity of self-denial, of performing a languid service, and our serious behavior might possibly proceed from fainting spirits, and not from heart-felt sorrow. *It is not such a fast as this that God requires at our hands.* Such distinctions, and such mortifications, and indeed every act of self-denial or religious worship, that is performed independant of a rational, and humble *design* to *glorify him*, is wholly unprofitable to the creature, and by these occasional acts of outward abstinence *alone*, it is impossible we can honor God. *Positive forms* are doubtless necessary, and even indispensable, but still they must be qualified by the *intention* in order to promote our good. It is *this* God regards, accepts, and blesses. *Without* this, our most plausible sacrifices can only be esteemed as terms of *composition* with the Deity, which is presuming *insolence*, instead of worthy *honor*; whereas no worship can be pleasing to *him*, but so far as it is influenced by *obedience*, nor serviceable to ourselves, but in proportion as it helps to *prepare* us for the assistance of his further grace.

Fasting, then, is that peculiar Christian exercise, which fits us for the most becoming, and most
useful

useful of all other Christian virtues, and that is *humility of spirit*. The *effect* of it, as a godly practice, is *this*. By *duly* lowering the animal spirits, the mind becomes more equal to consider the things that belong to its eternal peace; *to raise its affections to things above*, and to weigh the real insignificancy of things on earth. Of the truth of this, we may judge, by that state of mind we frequently experience, when our bodies are indisposed, our spirits oppressed by accidental circumstances, or when trouble, like an armed man, compels us to *reflexion*. In either of these cases (where religion hath taken any possession of the soul) we are then most apt to fly to God; we are then most capable of relishing the motions of his good spirit; and the reason is very evident, because our affections are then less *divided*. Under this frame of mind, we suspect and discard the friendship of the world, and consequently we draw nearer to God; for he that loveth the world, is at enmity with God, that is, he who trusteth to it, independent of submission to God's government, and direction of all events. Now *fasting*, (in a *rational* use of the exercise) is an artificial method, depending on our own *will*, to make our bodies *fitter* temples for the Holy Spirit to inhabit, than they are likely to prove, while under no restriction, but devoted to all manner of carnal indulgence. A very little is sufficient to support the body for a while, without any inconvenience, or danger of injury; and a very little *more* than what is absolutely necessary for its proper maintenance, will put the spirits in a train unsuitable

able to religious sorrow, and penitential meditations.. It is *that little* then, according to our different constitutions, that alone is needful for us to abstain from, in order that we may be said rationally, and profitably to *fast*. *For it is not in outward shew like the hypocrites, with sad countenances, that we may appear unto men to fast*, but that we may *humble ourselves in heart*, before our Father who is in heaven, who knowing the innocence of the design, will reward us *openly*, by blessing us with such further degrees of grace, and strength, as shall convince the world that all our works begun, continued, and ended in him, whether fasting, prayer, or other religious duties, are all accepted by him. I think it therefore necessary to repeat, my brethren, to avoid all possibility of error on a subject of such serious import, that we attribute no *merit* to the act of fasting, singly as a personal work, nor has it any peculiar virtue in *itself*, further than as it is influenced by a holy purpose of exerting every means to become thoroughly sensible of our sins, to assist a train of serious thoughts at the most solemn seasons, and thereby to raise an humble hope, that we may become still more sanctified vessels for the work to which we are called.

If the Apostle's express command *Not to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, is binding upon all Christians, at *all* times; it must carry a stronger obligation on us *to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul* at these *fixed* times, when we are called upon by the example of the most eminent saints, by the practice and injunctions of our holy church,

church, and by the dictates of our *wounded consciences*, to examine *whether we repent us truly of our former sins*. When we are urged steadfastly to purpose (by God's grace) to *lead a new life*, to cherish *a lively faith in Christ*, with the most thankful remembrance of his death (which awful season now speaks feelingly, to our hearts) *and to be in charity with all men* : I say, it behoves us surely, at such a time as this, to use every natural means to check the overflowings of ungodliness, and as new born children of our heavenly Father, to frame our hearts for the receiving, and profiting by the sincere milk of God's most holy word.

That a certain degree of this exercise is indispensably necessary for *all* Christians, is undeniable from the very words of the text, *I keep under my body*, (says the Apostle) *and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*. Here, my brethren, we have proof that religious abstinence, is as needful and profitable for the *minister*, as the *congregation*; for myself, who am to *instruct*, as for you that *bear me*. We have here an example of a *most eminent saint*, a chosen vessel by Christ himself, one *miraculously* called to a particular work, of one, who was so highly gifted, as to be instrumental in converting the whole Gentile world to Christianity, who was so wonderfully preferred, and honored, as to be snatched up into the third heaven, and there shewn things that neither human *eye can see, or ear bear, nor even enter into the heart of man to conceive them*, while positively united to this body. And yet, it is observable, that
notwith-

notwithstanding all these surprising marks of divine indulgence, this same great Apostle, when returned to his appointed task of *trial*, prescribes to his disciples, the regular, outward means of fitting them for their warfare. He argues with them upon *rational* principles, as applicable to *worldly* practice. *Every one that striveth for the mastery* (says he) *is temperate in all things.* In order to obtain even an *earthly* prize, the runners must make a *proper preparation*; and it is indisputable, that he who obtains the prize, would never have succeeded, had he slighted the usual, and necessary mode of *training for the race.* And the Apostle's information in the comparison is equally persuasive. *They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.* In pursuit of which heavenly prize it is, that he declares it is expedient for him *to keep under his body, and bring it into subjection*; that is, to regulate the appetites, and passions, to which his frail nature was exposed, by a prudent course of occasional abstinence, and self denial: and this he did in order that he might find less difficulty in using his mortal body in the work of his spiritual calling. In proportion, therefore, as our religious advancement is of far more consequence to us, than our utmost *temporal* prospects; so may we safely adopt those means the Apostle advises, both to secure our ground, and help us forward in the race that is set before us.

But valuable as this example is, to encourage becoming acts of self-denial, we have still a *greater.* The illustrious Author of our religion, the incarnate Son

Son of God, that spotless Lamb in whom there was no sin, no blemish, even *Christ himself* while in the body, FASTED; and of this we may be certain, that there was no part of *his* conduct, but what was absolutely *needful*, or it would never have been recorded; and that he did not deliver these words, *I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done*, but purposely, that we might carefully *follow* that example, in the stated use of abstinence or prayer, or public worship, forgiveness of our enemies, *humility*, or any other heavenly precept that his preaching or his practice recommended.

It is an established maxim in religion, that he who cannot command his thoughts, and will, must soon lose the command of his *actions*: it is highly expedient, therefore, that we should carefully observe the working of those springs which give too hasty current to the thoughts and will, lest our conduct partakes of this irregularity; and to prevent the fatal influence, another pious writer * defines thus clearly, the important use of self-denial. “ It consists, (says he,) in such a sparing use of “ God’s good creatures, as may help to deaden an “ improper love of them, so as to make us grow “ indifferent to their enjoyment, and thereby lessen “ the weight of carnal wishes; for the nature of “ these being to lead us on to evil, by *lowering* “ their *influence* on the *body*, the grace of God becomes more effectual in turning the balance of “ the human will.” *Even Jesus Christ pleased not*

* Norris on Christian Prudence, page 300.

himself, says St. Paul, Rom. xv. 3. Well, therefore, might his bright example render his holy servant, and also the figure of his mystical body (the Christian church) most ready to adopt, and recommend the practice of religious fasting. If our Blessed Lord spared not his own innocent flesh, but submitted to such restraints; surely it behoves the *sinner* to beware of *pampering his body continually*, and instead of refusing it nothing that can gratify its lusts, to bring it under an orderly subjection. And truly may it be said, of those many vicious passions, to which our mortal nature is exposed, *that their kind can be subdued by nothing but by prayer, and fasting*, whereas by encouraging luxurious indulgences, we ourselves assist the victory which our unruly passions gain. Let all true Christians, then, be diligent to follow the Apostle's example, and advice, and none does it concern more, than the ministers of the word, *lest that by any means when they have preached to others, they themselves should be cast-away*, even as was the fate of Judas. These latter words, my brethren, contain a very awful admonition, indeed! They argue plainly, that it is very possible for even a well-informed, industrious, and even faithful pastor, after all his seeming pious labors, towards *others*, to make shipwreck of his *own soul* at last. God forbid! will all, in Christian charity exclaim, who are witnesses to the *diligence* of such a character, and who perhaps have *profited* by him as an *instrument* towards their good. But this, you see, the Apostle expressly affirms is *possible*; and at the same time shews us, both how the misery is *effected*, and how
it

it may be *avoided*. For example, if his *practice* does not tally with his *doctrine*, his labors as to *himself*, shall be as the sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal; just as the *music* may be *good*, but *performer* *worthless*. Gracious Master, help us! Here is enough to make us scrupulously careful, lest by any means we should fall short of glory. Here is an argument that impels us to follow *every* means that may prevent it. With a true sense, then, of this sentence of life or death upon our souls, you will not wonder, my brethren, that we are *instant in season, and out of season*, to warn you against the wrath to come. This is enough not only to spur us on to the employment of every *outward* means the church prescribes to lead us unto God, but to be continually on our guard to conquer our *inward* foes. Not only to *preach, exhort, and pray*, but to *keep under our own bodies* in all things; to keep the house swept and garnished, for the reception of that blessed Spirit, who will effectually in time suppress the growth of all those deadly passions which would bring us into captivity to sin, and death, lest by any means we are finally cast away; lest pride, malice, envy, want of charity, worldly pleasure, vanity, ambition, or selfish hope, wean us from the love of God, and render us unprofitable servants.

Now the seeds of all these dangerous principles, lurk in the souls of every one of us. It is the grace of God alone, that can deaden, or destroy them, so that they may not work our everlasting ruin, but it depends on *us* to use the means he mercifully has appointed

appointed for that end, to hear and obey the glorious Author of our salvation, to strive that the spirit that was in Christ may be in us; and to render that blessing possible, to beware of making the temple of the Lord, the temple of harlots, or any other unclean thing; to avoid all acts of gluttony, intemperance, and impurity, and to *perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.*

Now, is the season, my brethren, for reducing to practice, *one* of the most plain, easy, and effectual methods of securing the grace of God, and a place in his eternal kingdom. Sorrow goes before joy, in every virtuous struggle, in every holy example; even in the stupendous work of man's redemption. In proportion as we humble ourselves, we shall be exalted. You see it in the case of Jesus Christ himself, and in the pattern of all his holy followers; they advanced *through suffering to glory*, and we shall happily feel it in *ourselves*, if so be we mortify our bodies, in sincerity, and in truth; if *we crucify the flesh*, with its vain desires; if we deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts. Let us call to mind, that before his *first* victory over the Tempter our Lord *fasted forty days*; and before his *final* triumph over sin and death, he likewise prepared himself by *prayer*, and *abstinence*, and every outward act of exemplary humiliation, ministering to his disciples, even to the washing of their feet. Though he *knew* no sin, he was in the *place* of sin, and he left us an example what the *real* sinner must do, if he would be fitted for his favor. If then we earnestly desire victory, we must repent of our sins, and we must

so far conquer our bodily appetites, that we may *forward our repentance*. While the blood is inflamed with carnal provocation, it will not admit the silent, sorrowing, self-condemning meditations that are suitable to this grave season; but by *keeping under our bodies*, we shall in some sense punish our past excesses, we shall find a remedy against present temptation, and a preservative against the future. *We must rend our hearts and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God, and he will have mercy on us*; we must turn unto him in *prayer*, that He would enable us to do effectually, what by his written word He hath taught us is our *duty*. In short, the end of this, and every other pious labor of our lives, must be to lower us in our own esteem, that we may deeply see our great depravity, ingratitude, and unworthiness; and strive after such contrition, as will recommend us to the mercy of our Redeemer.

What can we do better, then, at *this* time, my brethren, than to implore Almighty God, both *now*, and when we return home, that He would give us all, the spirit of *true repentance*. To beseech our Blessed Saviour to *intercede* for us, that for *his sake*, and merits, we may be enabled to go through the present holy season with the strictest watch both over our *lips, and lives*; that we may carefully avoid all possible temptation to what may slacken us in this necessary duty, and enter upon such acts of self-denial, in all things, as are convenient to our daily course of hearty sorrow for our sins: that from henceforth we may gain a stronger habit of mastering our affections, and laboring more ear-

nestly to make our calling and election sure ; and in whatever degree the sincerity of our exertions may happily procure us strength to make a good beginning, let us be particularly cautious, to qualify our poor endeavours with *profound humility*, disclaiming all pretence to any share of *commendation* : for this is not the time to pride ourselves upon *our miserable* performances, but to search and deplore the imperfection of our choicest works. If therefore the Lord shall please to bless our holy resolutions, let us gratefully, and devoutly say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name be all the praise and glory, for thy mercy and thy truth sake, who hast bountifully promised, that if we confess our sins, Thou wilt be just and gracious unto us, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* ; both from the habit of living in it *now*, and consequently from the punishment that awaits all ungodliness *hereafter*.

When the mind of a sinner is truly awakened, he cannot but tremble at the danger he has provoked ; he cannot but be grateful for the mercies he has received. He will then joyfully close with any, and every means, to lighten him of his heavy burden, to prevent the return of his sore disease, and to enable him to serve his Maker, with a quiet conscience. *He that hath been forgiven much, will love much*. And as we must all confess, if God was rigidly severe, to mark what is done amiss, few would be able to abide his just displeasure, so let this incline us principally, to cherish the sublimest of all other Christian attainments, and imitate the loveliest of the divine perfections, which is **MERCY**.

This

This is the charity, the Christian love, that covereth the multitude of sins. It is this heavenly temper that should be the main object of every religious exercise, for it is this will render us dearest and nearest to our Master's love. Teach me then, Good Lord, by thy Holy Spirit, whenever duty urges me, to acquit myself as a messenger of thy counsels, to reprove with *mildness*, to accuse with *justice*, and to punish with *compassion*; and grant us all, a tender feeling for the wants and miseries of each other, both temporal and spiritual; and as there is joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth, O Lord increase the number of penitents, and the joys of Heaven; O deliver Thou *me*, and every sinner of this congregation, from the malice of the enemy, and vouchsafe us *all*, the grace of true conversion. Pardon, we beseech Thee, the iniquity of thy servants, according to the greatness of thy mercy, and speak those words of comfort to our souls, (now mourning under the afflictive sense of our manifold, and great offences) which formerly dismissed the spirit of thy servant *Moses* in peace, and safety; I HAVE PARDONED THEE. In all the doubts and fears of our weak, desponding nature, let the similar consolation delivered to thy Apostle be ever uppermost in our thoughts, to support and comfort us both in time, and in eternity. MY GRACE IS ALL-SUFFICIENT FOR THEE. Thus armed with faith, with hope, and charity, we shall cheerfully embark in any pious labor that can render us more pleasing in thy sight, and having done our best to renounce the world, the devil, and the flesh; we shall

give proof of being thy faithful soldiers and servants *here*, and die in stedfast hope of being qualified to serve Thee better, in thy heavenly kingdom. O Blessed Jesus, who hast set us the pattern of true humility, and every other excellence; and dost encourage us by thy own practice, to pursue these needful methods of conquering our carnal nature, do Thou assist us, in every trial! that in all our words and works, we may glorify thy blessed name, and through the grace of thy Holy Spirit, obtain a final victory over every danger that surrounds us. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for the sake of that glorious person who is gone before, to conciliate thy favor towards helpless sinners, and to prepare a place for all, who *long for his appearing*. To Thee, most Mighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all power and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON VI.

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY.

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LUKE xxiv. 46.

*And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it be-
beoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.
the third day.*

IF there is any solemn day in the year, my brethren, that particularly leads us to encourage a more than ordinary serious train of thinking; the occasion of our meeting at this time, must afford an awful subject of most devout, and humble meditation. And in proportion as we perceive the foul neglect of many to pay due respect to this *important season*, it should excite our charitable pity for their ungrateful thoughtlessness, and stir us up the more, to beware *ourselves*, lest we abuse such tender mercies of God towards us. It should urge us to study the *word* of God, and to use *that* shield continually, against the sin of *unbelief*. For we are told, 2 Tim. iii. 1. That *in the latter days perilous times shall come*. 1 Tim. iv. 1. That *some shall depart from the faith*. And 2 Pet. iii. 3. That *there shall come scoffers and mockers in the last times*. And we read also, in the xviiiith chapter of St. Luke, and the

8th verse, that our Blessed Lord himself foretold the falling off of many in the latter days. These are his words. *Nevertheless, when the son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Christ is certainly here speaking more particularly of the Jewish nation, and of the judgments which (when he was ascended into his glorious kingdom) he should exercise against *them*, for their perverse infidelity, and cruel persecution of his followers. But if it happened (as we know it did) that notwithstanding the actual presence of Christ among them; the advantages both of his *own*, and his Apostles preaching; and the miraculous sanction of their commission; yet many so soon *turned from the faith*, either through violence of persecution, or from *unbelief*, so as to *grow weary and faint in their minds, and to ask where is the promise of his coming?* And even that some of them began to forsake the assemblies of the saints, (Heb. x. 25.) and others to turn Apostates (that is, fell back into the old prejudices of the Jewish law); I think from all these unfavorable events, we may fairly argue, upon our Lord's declaration before delivered, that the faith of many Christians *will* wax cold towards the conclusion of time: that proportionably *with the remnant that shall be saved*, we may truly question whether he will *find faith on earth*, when he cometh to judge it, and to reward his true servants, and punish their enemies. For how few will then be found, who in a comparative light, *by faith and patience, and perseverance in well-doing*, will appear *fitted* for his reward?

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But should any one object to the propriety of this interpretation of the passage, I would refer them to *facts*; at least to our present experience. Can any thing demonstrate a more lamentable mark of Christians declining from the motives of their faith, than the general, and ungrateful disregard of this *very day*? How little is it attended to? How grossly is it profaned, in comparison to the usage of the Church in former times; even within *our* memory, of less than half a century? Surely if people had a single proper notion of the work of their REDEMPTION, they could not discover such gross contempt of the anniversary of its COMPLETION? People baptized in the name of *Christ*, and professing the precepts of his most holy religion, could never forbear to celebrate the memory of his *death*; a death that gave *life* to the whole world! the blessed period of their own deliverance from *death eternal*! This could never happen, I say, if they were *sincere* in their profession—It is *impossible*! Their own example, and their own feelings influencing their authority, would either invite or compel their families and dependants to keep *THIS* day holy, though they sat loose to every other pious obligation of the kind, throughout the year. But when we perceive such universal indifference towards such a *solemn* season, such strange insensibility in the parties to be benefited, can we with reason judge that love and faith in *Christ* is *increased* amongst us? Is it not a most reproachful reflexion against the majority of a reformed, and excellent establishment, that any *particular* sect

(call them *Methodists* or what you please) should rival us in zeal and veneration for a DYING SAVIOR? Let them be *two* hundred thousand strong instead of *one*; they are but a small portion of so many millions of souls, all depending on the love of God's eternal Son for endless happiness! And if the slender honor shewn this day by us of the Church of England, and other communities of our Christian brethren, is not a melancholy sign, that the love of many is departing, there is no good rule to judge by, in *any case whatever*. 'Till, therefore, we perceive a *steady, reverent, and uniform* respect, to the most important offices of our religion, we must conclude that genuine faith is on the wane amongst us. But we will further try the truth of this apprehension, by a short and plain inquiry. Alas! my brethren, how many are there, even in this Christian land, in proportion of the enlightened in saving knowledge, who are wholly ignorant of, and unconcerned about the important consequence of this day's awful business? Is it any wonder, that they should be barren in the *fruits* of faith, when so little of the *seed* hath taken root within their hearts? But to place the picture in a still and more serious point of view. Let us only examine, where neither ignorance, or want of opportunity yield any plea for lack of faith, what good testimony of a real Christian zeal do the lives and general example of the highest and best educated afford us? Which is most conspicuous, the *form* or the *power* of godliness among the rich, and great? Alas! how is the habit even of decent *form* relaxed among *that* portion

portion of society, whose becoming practice of regular devotion, was wont, in former days, to influence the manners of the common people, and *lead* them to their duty? How slightly now, are they affected by the glorious riches of all saving truths? Can any thing supply more terrible consideration, than the certain sentence which awaits all such? And as to the common people, even where every possible means are furnished to teach the principles of their religion to them, how dead are many to the very design, and end, of their Savior's life, death, and resurrection? These must be allowed, my brethren, most miserable tokens of the general growth of Christian faith amongst us! But brotherly love presents a hope that things are *at the worst*; that a happy change may in due course of time effectually appear. The valuable institutions in honor of the Sabbath, in order to promote an early habit of venerating God's day, and word, and to check the ruinous effects of ignorance and vice, seem to promise future good. Nothing can prevent it, but the neglect of those to whom the support and care of these most wholesome remedies are intrusted, and of whom God will require an account for their diligence in the work, and the exertions of their power to increase it.

The mention of this subject does naturally lead me to such a particular discharge of my pastoral office on this occasion, as may remove all plea of ignorance in any who hear me: and as for those quite dead to the benefit of such instruction, we
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can only pray, that God may awaken them in time, to see their danger, and to escape the certain consequence of wilfully neglecting these **MEANS OF GRACE**. As far then, my brethren, as depends on *me*, the humble instrument of God's appointment *here*, to inform, exhort, and *teach* you in the way of life eternal, I shall now proceed as a regular groundwork to what I have to add upon this solemn subject, both now, and in the evening, to deliver a short and useful history of the day we are met to celebrate.

For the benefit of those, then, who cannot read, or are ill supplied with books, or (which is far more lamentable) have been neglected in their earlier years, it may assist their present serious dispositions to lend attention to the plain account that follows.

To a thinking Christian, it will evidently appear, why this day is called *Good-Friday*. This was the day, my friends, in which God wrought for man the greatest possible good he could bestow upon him. The blessed effects of our Savior's sufferings, were everlasting peace to fallen creatures, the ground of all our hope and joy; and from these unspeakable good things that Christ hath purchased for us by his death, well may the day be stiled *good* to us, in the highest sense of the expression. It was on this day, the Blessed Jesus fulfilled what was decreed in the eternal council of divine love. He made an atonement for the sins of the whole world, (for all *who believe in him*) and by shedding his own blood, obtained eternal redemption for us. Great
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therefore as are the benefits of this precious sacrifice to all mankind, yet still it is incumbent on us to observe the season of its completion, with deep humility, and unfeigned seriousness of heart. We cannot be supposed, indeed, to sorrow for the *effect*, for that must naturally excite our grateful joy, but the *CAUSE* of this astonishing condescension and love of God, should fill us all with *true concern*. From the very first times of Christianity, the remembrance of our Savior's sufferings hath always been-observed as a day of fasting, and humiliation. Grateful, and feeling Christians, could not fail expressing due grief, and much affliction, from a sense of that load of guilt in human nature, which subjected our dear Redeemer to that painful, and disgraceful death of crucifixion. As the day, then, was justly called good, both on account of the great benefit derived to mankind from their Lord's all-sufficient sacrifice, as likewise of the pious exercises which Christians practised on this occasion; with equal propriety might the preceding week be called *holy*. In the early ages of the church, it was termed the *great week* also; because, most truly *great*, were the actions which marked the original business of it. Death was conquered; for through Christ's death, *He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the Devil*. By Christ the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was broken down, for he who is our peace, hath made both ONE, that he might reconcile them both to God, in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, Eph. ii. 14. 16. And *holy* surely should both day, and week, be ever kept, which

which annually reminds us of such astonishing mercy. Some years back, the example of the primitive times, seemed happily to influence the practice of our *own* country, for our great city demonstrated the most just, and pious observance of this solemn season; public amusements were forbidden, and the busy spirit of trade gave way to the serious spirit of religious gratitude. All descriptions of people seemed zealous to establish the respect which the remembrance of such awful, and interesting scenes required at the hands of undeserving mortals. And as the important events of this memorable day, has ever filled the hearts of real Christians with wonder, praise, and comfort, so, to the end of time, must it equally affect all those who have any sense of an hereafter, of the necessity of a Friend, or Mediator, to plead the cause of weak, and fallen nature, to screen it from the demands of RIGID JUSTICE, by the atoning influence of INFINITE MERCY.

To convince us, therefore, both of the expediency, and blessing, of this sacrifice for sin, it is proper we should now more closely weigh the particular *doctrine* which the text contains. Let us dwell then, a little, on the important truths that *it behoved Christ to suffer*. (1.) As it was a confirmation of what was *written*. (2.) As being more especially the seal of universal deliverance from the power of sin, and the wages of it.

First, *It BEHOVED Christ to suffer*, that is, it was *fit* or *proper* that the Blessed Jesus should undergo the cruel sufferings and death he condescended to submit to, as on this day, because, as He himself

declares, *for this cause came He into the world.* The infinite wisdom and goodness of God did thus appoint it, from *free love* to his otherwise lost creatures. *And He came accordingly, to do his Father's will in all things.* IT BEHOVED HIM, also, because in so doing, all that was written of him in the Prophets, and foretold even from the first fall of man, could not otherwise have been accomplished; and God's last dispensation, or dealing with men, in order to their endless happiness, was thereby universally declared to all the world, as the never-failing principle of religious faith, and practice.

For your fuller instruction of what was *written* concerning the sacrifice of Christ, we will begin with the *sign* of it under the law. Though it was clearly prefigured in some degree even as early as in God's trial of his servant Abraham's faith, who did not hesitate to offer up his dear, and only son, trusting in the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Almighty, who he was convinced would order nothing but what would finally magnify his own glory, and promote the creature's good. But in the institution of the *passover* by God's command to Moses, in which the Paschal Lamb was to be slain, we have expressly pointed out to us, the Lamb of God *slain before the foundation of the world*; that is, as determined from the beginning, that *so it must be.* When the brazen serpent was set up in the wilderness by the same Prophet, as a remedy for the wounded people who were stung by serpents, and to prove their faith in that partial method which God appointed for their *cure*, we are again presented

sented with a *sign* of the Son of man, and the virtue that should flow to all who look up to Him with lively faith. And to this He himself alludes in John iii. 14. in these very words, *For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up*; and in John xii. 32. *I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me*. Again, all the sacrifices for sin declared that *without shedding of blood there was no remission*, which referred to Christ's death. And lastly, the grand sign of all, under the law, was the day of general expiation, or atonement, which God commanded to be kept under denunciation of the heaviest punishments, and to be equally observed, both by the High Priest, and people. The history of it you will see at large in the xvth chapter of Leviticus. It was on this day *alone*, the High Priest went by himself into the *Holy of Holies*, that is, the inward part of the sanctuary, where God was in a peculiar manner present, before the mercy-seat. And the Apostle, in Heb. ii. 17. in reference to this very sign, sets forth our Savior to have been *our High Priest*, and on this his passion-day, to have offered the sacrifice of *himself*; to have borne our sins in his *own body*, and expiated them with *his own blood*, that is, by virtue of its being shed for us, to have entered the Holy Place, not made with hands, and to have appeared as before the actual mercy-seat on high, in the presence of the Father for us. So far then, it *behooved him to suffer*, in order to fulfil the signs delivered of him.

Let us now consider the *propriety* of his sufferings, in order to establish the *prophecies* relating to him,

him, of which, time will permit me to mention but a few. Isaiah, 53d chapter, represents the Messiah, or anointed Savior of the world, as *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, oppressed, and afflicted, wounded and bruised, brought to the slaughter, and cut off out of the land of the living*. A very little attention to the history of our Savior's life, as recorded in the Evangelists, will fully prove the *truth* of this prediction. Further, He was said to be *numbered with the transgressors*; which may allude both to the disgraceful manner of his being crucified between the *malefactors*; and to his being *made sin for us*, that is, his suffering the *punishment* we deserved. Another Prophet foretels, Zach. xi. 12. the very price for which He was betrayed, even thirty pieces of silver: and *that they should look on him whom they pierced*; meaning, that as *when the centurion, and they that stood by, saw what was done, they exclaimed, truly this was the Son of God*: so, when the Christian deeply weighs what an astonishing work was done by Christ, thus humbling himself, and laying down his life; he may, with pious sorrow, look up to *him*, whose heart was pierced for *our* sins, and casting away all dregs of unbelief, may cry out in raptures of gratitude, joy, and wonder, *My Lord! and My God!*

Another literal prophecy of what should happen, to the Blessed Jesus, is mentioned in Psalm xxii. 16. where the cruel method of their torturing the Lord of life is thus expressed: *They shall pierce his hands and his feet*; and to conclude this list of written testimonies of what was to befall the Son of man,

the Savior of the world, the Prophet Daniel, ix. 26. most pointedly declares *Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself*. And, in his own kind, affecting preparation of his disciples for these days of mourning, he constantly reminds them of the unavoidable necessity of his temporal fate, in these words; *How else shall the scriptures be fulfilled that so it must be?* Agreeable therefore to every *sign*, and divine *appointment*, which God has registered in his holy volume; St. Paul makes it the constant ground-work of his preaching, that Christ must *needs have suffered*; opening and alledging the truth of this only saving doctrine, from the authority of scripture, and proving to his hearers every where, *That the same Jesus, or Savior, whom he preached unto them, was Christ the anointed Lamb and Son of God, sent and delivered as an all-sufficient sacrifice and atonement, for the sins of the whole world.*

Thus having in as full a manner as the time will allow, afforded you plain proof *that it behoved Christ to suffer, as it is written*; I should now proceed to shew you how *essentially necessary* it was for him to suffer for our *present regeneration, and support*, no less than for our *future deliverance, and peace*. But this I will defer for my discourse in the evening; and conclude at present, with a few short, and serious remarks, which may be useful to prepare us for celebrating the solemn remembrance of this day's business, by a joint and humble participation of that holy ceremony He positively instituted for that purpose.

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Only let us consult the *reason* of such a tribute, at this time, my brethren. If it is proper and profitable for us to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper at *any* season, the propriety of it must much more appear on this *particular day*, when we are celebrating the very *action*, of which it is the EXPRESS MEMORIAL! Oh, my friends, that you were all thoroughly convinced of the serious nature of this day's work! Oh that we were come to such a knowledge of the truth, as to keep the anniversary return of this solemn fast, as *Christians* ought. Alas! does not the dreadfully careless practice of the multitude, shew too clearly, the very low estate of *vital* piety amongst us! It may appear a bold remark I am going to make, but I fear it is too well founded. That if Jesus Christ had *actually* been crucified in this place to-day, scarce a person would have refrained a barbarous curiosity to see him languish, and expire. But alas! how few are equally ready to hear the *news* of *their salvation*? How few are willing to honor the *memory* of that gracious Lord, who bought *free pardon* and eternal happiness for them, by the bitterest sufferings and most cruel death! With lifeless, and ungrateful hearts, they refuse to watch ONE HOUR. They go on laboring for the bread that *perisheth*, while they neglect that heavenly food, that *nourisheth unto life*. *That*, doubtless, should be done, but *this* should not be left *undone*: for whatever else we gain, (even were it the whole world,) if we lose our souls, we have made a *miserable bargain*. But we shall presently see, how many with shameless countenance,

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and strange insensibility, will turn their backs upon their Savior's gracious invitation; and thus confirm the truth, how nearly their ingratitude fulfills his prophecy, with which I opened my discourse, *Whether when he comes again to judgment He should find faith among the sons of men*, for to refuse the precious means of grace, is surely not a *Sign of faith*. To what, then, can we attribute this gross contempt of such valuable blessings! the general disregard of times so solemn! It is because people are really ignorant, unconvinced, and unconverted. *Faith cometh by hearing*; they will not come, where they might hear, and learn their duty, and while this obstinacy prevails, how shall they ever be reformed without a miracle of grace! And how can any presumptuously expect that miracles of favor will be exerted for them, if they despise the ordinary means of grace, provided for their recovery; if they are deaf to all the miracles held out to them in the life, and death of Christ their Savior. Let us humbly thank our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that we are not *all* thus dead to this his inestimable provision for our growth in faith, and every Christian virtue. Let us continue to set our brethren an example of our bounden duty in this respect; and endeavour to warm their gratitude by proposing to their serious consideration a plain and natural case.

Let us suppose an *earthly* benefactor, who from excess of friendship, should willingly lay down his life, to rescue us, from the sentence of the law,
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which our misconduct had deserved, to secure to us the comforts of our *posterity*, and our *dearest interests*; could we unfeelingly bear to see the virtues of this innocent person most wantonly insulted, by a graceless neglect to honor the remembrance of his willing sacrifice? With horror, doubtless, and indignation, should we reprobate such unmerited treatment! Only consider, my brethren, the reproach that sinners cast upon the cross of Christ; only consider the PERSON who bled, the CAUSE, and the EFFECT of all his sufferings, and your feelings (if any you possess) will rise proportionably to the *unspeakable sorrows* of the *Son of Man*. Could you withstand obeying the dying request of such an *earthly* friend as I have just described, delivered to *remind* you of his strong affection, and to guard you from future danger, without acknowledging yourselves most worthless objects of his love? Monsters of ingratitude! And can you refuse the last commands of your *heavenly* Benefactor, enjoined to preserve the memory of his inestimable benefits, and to enable you to *receive* and *relish* the endless blessings he has in store for you? Let conscience speak for once; stifle not its dictates; but pray that your hearts of stone, may be softened into hearts of flesh. That you may own, and feel, and ever hold fast, the important truths this day delivered to you. So that ye may no longer resist the spirit of God's grace, but embrace the timely offers of his tender mercy. That ye may taste how comforting to the sinner's fears, these choicest memorials of their

Savior's *love* are rendered. May all who now apply in humble faith to share the interest of Christ's precious death and merits, approach with Christian reverence to his table, and retire with spiritual comfort. God grant this, for the sake of Him in whose name only is salvation, and who is faithful to his promise, that none who come to God through Christ, shall ever be cast out. Therefore to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all the praise and glory for every blessing we now enjoy, or hope for. Amen, Amen.

SERMON VII,

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY EVENING.

The same Text.

IN my former discourse to you upon these words, I confined myself to the *proof*, how far it *behooved* Christ to suffer, as his obedience was a *fulfilling* of what was *written*, or foretold of him. The solemn conclusion of our bounden service in the morning, occasioned me to defer the second division of my subject, to the present opportunity.

We come, now, to consider the *fitness*, and *necessity* of our Savior's death, as it was the efficacious instrument of *our deliverance both from the power and punishment of transgression*; for sin reigned in our mortal body, in consequence of original depravity, and for this, Christ's perfect obedience became a sufficient satisfaction in the sight of God, to *turn men from the power of Satan unto himself*. And as without a victory over him who is the father of sin (that is, the Devil) the creature would have been subject all his life long to bondage, and only qualified for the kingdom of Satan *hereafter*, so it was expedient, that the enemy's strong holds should be pulled down; and a power obtained for us, to *renew and recover ourselves from captivity, and dark-*

ness, and to enable us to walk as children of the day. To Christ's sufferings, and merits, we are therefore indebted, for the blessing of being called into this marvellous light. And in truth, if we did but seriously consider the great depravity of the human heart, that it is *treacherous above all things, and desperately wicked*. If we did but duly weigh the imperfection of our very *best* actions; the guilt that attends our *secret* sins (that is, the failings and errors we do not attend to, in the whole course of our lives.) If we did but trace the miserable selfishness, that pervades our fallen nature, and which draws us continually from the only object that should attach our *thoughts, words, and actions*, (*viz. the love of God*) we should be readily brought to confess, that without the all-sufficient virtue of an INFINITE MEDIATOR, no spirit of man could bear the presence of INFINITE PERFECTION. Well, then, may we be assured that it *BEHOVED Christ to suffer*, or we could never have become the adopted children of our heavenly Father. *It behoved him* (or it was proper) in that it afforded the greatest mark of divine love and goodness, that, as creatures, we can possibly enjoy. *It behoved him*, in that it was a necessary confirmation of his merciful design towards an offending, miserable race of beings; and justly may we exclaim, *O the riches of the wisdom, and goodness of God!* Goodness infinite, in contriving so glorious a provision for the recovery, and happiness of undeserving sinners, and wisdom infinite, in the manner of applying it to such general, and essential blessings. Wisdom hidden in the mystery of God's

God's eternal power, and perfection, which the angels wish to look into, to magnify their Maker's glory, and exalt their praise and wonder, and which is proposed to us, (a lower order of his creatures) as an exercise of faith, and due obedience. Let us be satisfied, that we are the happy objects of its gracious purpose, and receive with humility the offer of redemption in his name. Further it ~~has~~ *loved* him to suffer, that he might obtain the inestimable gift of *repentance* for us, and at the same time, qualify the deficiencies, even of ~~this~~ *his* indispensable duty of the heavy laden, and desponding sinner: for as all are concluded under sin, so *unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish*. The full consideration of this most *precious blessing* of the Gospel, can never be sufficiently indulged, by those who are sensible both of their great unworthiness, and dangerous state without sincere repentance, and sorrow for sin. And, lastly, when the light of the sun of righteousness arises upon our hearts, with the healing wings of peaceful hope, when we are disposed to contemplate the wondrous things that God hath prepared for those who love his Christ, who can refrain from owning the *blessed necessity* of our Master's suffering in our stead, of his bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and nailing them to his cross. When, I say, we incline to fix our affections on things above, all the trials and troubles of this mortal life, put on a very different appearance to what they were, when viewed with the eye of the carnal mind; we see the *cross* and *Christ* IN-

formable to the image of our divine example, who suffered in the flesh, to teach us what his faithful followers must expect, in some degree or other, during their state of pilgrimage, and trial. Let us then be content to live and die with Him, who came down from Heaven, to shew us the true way thither; and let us only fear, that the sacrifice we are called upon to make, may not be finished in the same spirit that completed HIS; that is, with *patience* in suffering, and due submission to the will of our heavenly Father. Then all the grandeur, and boasted happiness of worldly power and prosperity, will seem as *vanity itself*, in comparison of the promised glory that shall be revealed in us, when our warfare is accomplished, and we are fitted for the society of the saints in light.

By the *death* of Christ, then, my brethren, the ~~debt~~ is paid, God's justice has been satisfied, He has accepted the ransom of our souls, in the precious blood of his own beloved Son, by a method which his goodness, power, and wisdom judged all-sufficient to reinstate us into his heavenly favor. *Christ died for the ungodly. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* But let us beware not to *mistake the terms*; Christ died for the ungodly, in *this sense only*: in *that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*, therefore, a *full and perfect expiation* was absolutely needful to be made for *original sin*, because as man must necessarily continue under a degree of *imperfection*, and *depravity*, derived to him from the *fall* of our first parents, *until the times of the refreshing of the body shall come*; so, without an *atone-*
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ment; it would be impossible he should be finally accepted. And in *this further* sense, Christ is likewise said to have died for the sins of the *whole world*; (not that his death will prove effectual to deliver those who *die in their sins*, or for *all wicked persons whatsoever*,) but to blot out the effect of the general stain in nature, the hand-writing against us, which would have rendered *every creature* obnoxious to God's rigid justice, unless due satisfaction had been made. When, therefore, he is said to have *died for the ungodly*, we are not to understand it, that he will plead his sacrifice in favor of those who *persist in wickedness*, and despise the pressing invitations of his Gospel: for though it is most true, *that in Christ shall all be made alive*, yet this relates not to an indiscriminate deliverance of all who *merely call upon his name*, but it signifies, that all who shall be raised at the last day to endless glory, can *only* obtain it *through Him*: it also implies *that life*, which is more particularly alluded to in this second division of my subject. For to be *made alive in Christ*, is to experience the grace of being delivered from such a *power* of sin even now, without which grace, we shall still be subject to the *wages* of it HEREAFTER. And this is the *seal* or *witness* that IT BEHOVED HIM TO SUFFER; that though subject to the fear of death, in consequence of the original curse, yet sin should no longer *reign* in us to the unavoidable ruin of the soul; but that so far should the virtue of Christ's death check the deadly influence of sin in human nature, that by pleading his merits, and applying to his mediation, we should receive

receive the *spirit of regeneration*, and strength to obtain *victory*. In *this* light, He is the *universal* Savior of all mankind, for He has purchased a *possibility* for *all* to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. The *effect*, indeed, is confined to God's various modes of dealing with his creatures, his own wise government of the world, best times, and opportunities, and that measure of light, understanding, and grace, bestowed on different nations, communities, and people. As it is then certain, that Christ *thus* died for all, most just is it that at the *name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things on earth*.

There is a passage in St. John xi. 50. which will greatly help to illustrate the words of my text, and the sense I have hitherto given to it. *Ye know nothing at all*, (said the high priest in the spirit of prophecy) *nor consider that it is expedient for us* (or THAT IT BEHOVETH) *that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not*: which we may fairly interpret *thus*: That the sacrifice of Christ was necessary to satisfy for the imperfection of human nature, in the very *best*, lest the *whole nation* should perish for want of such a mediator; that is, should miss being justified. It may refer also to Christ's *dying for the ungodly* in the sense of the *conversion* of many through his name, for, as follows, *he did not die for that nation only*, but agreeable to what the Prophet Isaiah foretold, that he should be *a light to the Gentiles, and salvation to the ends of the earth*, as is here expressed, *to gather in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad*.

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This is a doctrine it behoves *all men*, equally to cherish: the *righteous*, for the blessing of God's preventing, and assisting grace; the *sinner*, for the merciful gift of *repentance*, and that his *sincere* obedience shall be accepted for the sake of his Redeemer. But doubtless all men, (and *Christians* in a higher degree) partake of the regenerating influence of the Redeemer's love; for all men have a share of grace unless they are *reprobates*; or how could they be said, with any truth, to receive *the grace of God in vain*; and unless we disbelieve the *divinity* of our Lord, we cannot doubt, but that the effect of his atonement must be *infinite* and *universal*, that is, that he hath renewed the creature to a *capacity* of salvation, and obtained a general power of recovery in their fallen nature; a possibility of correcting the carnal will, and conducting themselves acceptably to God, according to the portion of spiritual information he hath vouchsafed unto them, and the *means* appointed for their improvement. Was not this *true*, the creature could not be said, in any *essential* sense, to be *redeemed at all*; and without granting he is redeemed, and consequently accountable for his abuse of power *restored*, how can we admit the propriety of this declaration, *that God will be justified in judgment*. This, then, my brethren, must be the meaning of FREE GRACE: that no man is under a *necessity* of sinning, and *perishing* for ever; God may have made different vessels to the various uses of his glory, but it would be contradictory to one of his *most essential attributes*, to have made any on *purpose to be broken*. Indeed
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he positively declares as much in these words, *that He willetb not the death of any sinner*; and for this reason, that a talent, or means of grace, is dispensed to every one (through the blood of Jesus) to profit withal, to enable them to bring forth *such* works as shall, in the unerring appointment of God's providential government, prepare them for a port of peace, and rescue them from the power of the Destroyer. As Christ, my brethren, has purchased this power for us, let us beware not to do *despite to the spirit of grace*, but pray to Him continually, that He will intercede with his Father, to shed the spirit of love and holiness in our hearts.

If it behoved him to suffer, to accomplish all these things; if such mighty benefits could not have been obtained, but by a life of *innocence* passed in *forrow*; and by a death of *torment*; but by an act, in which infinite mercy, was leagued with infinite wisdom, to complete the work: surely it behoveth us, to be most *grateful*, and not to look upon the blood of the covenant as an indifferent thing. And great must be the guilt of those, who trifle with the riches of the offer, and slight, or abuse the *day*, and *season*, when the hopes of everlasting life was *seated* to them.

It is impossible for a *real Christian* not to confess the *propriety* and the *necessity* of using *every* becoming method, of remembering his Savior, at this *particular time*: and none can be more expedient, than the very service he instituted *himself*, on purpose, and which, in due obedience to his commands, *some* of us have performed, in humble hope of keep-

keeping alive that faith, so highly needful to our Christian progress. Subtle, and busy, is the Enemy of our souls; and one grand point he constantly labors, is to slacken our *zeal*, and tempt us to *lukewarmness*. A thousand treacherous excuses he artfully suggests, to throw us off our guard. Some perhaps may have fallen into this snare to day: They may falsely fancy, that their attendance on the Holy Communion now, might be superfluous and unnecessary, because they purpose so *soon* to enjoy that honor; but surely, to neglect *any* opportunity of reminding us of our duty, is not a *rational* way to fit us for partaking of the blessing, or of advancing to perfection. Let common sense direct us to discourage such dangerous waverings in a point of such importance. I will endeavor to expose the error of such remissness, by a familiar example.

If a fellow-creature was to present us with a handsome fortune, could we excuse ourselves for stifling our thoughts of gratitude whenever the memory of his kindness was renewed, only because we had *often* thanked him *publicly*, or intended to *repeat* it, on some *future* occasion? Can we conceive, he would esteem it *over-acting* our part, to notice him respectfully *whenever* he approached us? Or because we had met him very *late*ly, or expected to do it *speedily*, we should be justified to *turn aside*, and *purposely* avoid him, the next time he happened to see us? Further; if we thus yielded to the practice of *failing* to cultivate a grateful regard towards him on *all* occasions, is it not likely we should gradually cool in due remembrance of his unexpected, and unme-

unmeritted bounty? The application is easy to the case before us. It is impossible to be *too thankful* for the gift of *life eternal*, or to praise *too much* the gracious *Author* of the gift. It is impossible we can *too often* visit him on *earth*, with whom we hope to live for ever in *Heaven*; or to rate too highly, the transcendant mercy that vouchsafes to meet us *here*, that we may be well prepared for the transporting welcome of *good and faithful servants* **HEREAFTER**. Depend upon it, my brethren, if ever we wish to remember our Lord at all, and to profit by what he hath done for us, the affecting thoughts of this day's sufferings, must exalt our *gratitude, love and duty*. But little ground of favor can *they* expect, and thoroughly disgraceful is their conduct to the very *name* of Christians, who lament the loss of one day in the management of their worldly matters, or grudge the interruption of a few short hours to pay respect to such a Benefactor, and to command the deliverance of their souls from Satan's deadly power. How melancholy is the reflection, that all such thoughtless people waste *years* of blessed opportunity afforded them in mercy, to prepare for death, and heaven. Doubtless, the agonizing sorrows of the Son of man received much weight from his *foreknowledge*, how many would neglect the honors due unto him, and forfeit that *mercy*, he died to give them a capacity of receiving*.

But there is *another* consideration that should alarm, and urge us to our duty. From the *severity*

* This passage was added when the Holy Communion was administered on Good-Friday.

of Christ's sufferings we may judge of the dreadful *punishment* we shall escape, if we do but gain an interest in his death; nay more, of the inexpressible *happiness* we shall enjoy. That we may in good earnest receive a just impression of this day's wondrous work, let us only picture to ourselves the state we should be in *without* a MEDIATOR at the final day of reckoning! O may the thought sink deep into our hearts, even *now*, how we shall *all* feel on that most solemn occasion! Let us judge our thoughts, words, and actions, and flee to him for succour who alone is mighty to save. Let us consider, my friends, how necessary it is, to become *his now*, that He may *own us*, in the day of our extremity; lest we be condemned to suffer the fate of those, to whom our *then* triumphing Savior, shall say, *I know you not, depart from me, ye wicked, into everlasting fire.* Torments expressed by the severest pains, of which we have any notion in our present state: subject to *flames*; made capable of affecting the *spiritual* part of us; and far exceeding the pain of any *material* fire; for *that*, as it preys on matter, can only last a *little time*. But an immortal spirit is capable of *endless agonies and misery*, as well as *endless bliss and peace*, past all description. *Its worm dieth not, and its fire is not quenched.* And what should strike us with double fear and caution, is, that this will not be the fate of wilfully polluted, and most scandalous sinners *only*, but proportionably, of the *barely unprofitable servants also*.

But the terror of these reflexions is really so great, we need some comfort and relief to prevent our

fainting under the shocking fears they furnish. We need something to encourage us from *despair*, and guard us against such conduct as will render us deserving objects of them. To this *end*, my brethren, we must *well* consider the *person*, *nature*, and *sufficiency* of our *Mediator*, of *Him* who died to pour oil and wine into our wounds, during the grievous assaults we meet in this our perilous journey, and of silencing all our apprehensions. Here, is a *sufficient* remedy for all our cares, if so we seasonably apply it. And well does it behove us, *to kiss the Son lest he be angry*, and not to affront him, and trample under foot the blood of the covenant. Well does it behove us, to cultivate such a Christian character, as he will receive with a gracious welcome. This requires most diligent observation. We must become *merciful*, *as he is merciful*, not unprofitable, and hard-hearted. Nor will it be enough to shew our love, merely in *outward* honors to his *name*, or in his *ordinances*, by obeying them as the appointed *means* of grace; nor by leaning on his promises, while we continue careless of the *conditions* of receiving them, or rather the *sign*, or *proof* of our having partook of them. But in this, we cannot err. For He has expressly told us, *who* they are, that only shall be benefited by his merits. First, it is they who have shewn their *love* by their *obedience*: and further, even those are promised mercy, who, though they have transgressed his precepts, in a perverse, and *unconverted* state, have yet found grace to add *repentance* to their *faith*, and have proved more diligent upon conviction, to follow
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his example, and observe his laws. It is they who have used their best endeavours for *his sake*, to lighten the trials of his servants, whom he has been pleased to visit in exercise of *their patience*, and in proof of *our sincerity*, and *Christian love*. In short, it is, (in his own words,) *They*, who having acted like Christians, to one of the *least of these his brethren*, He declares to have done it to HIMSELF. Here, is the positive declaration of the Lord of Life, that we must *work*, as well as *believe*. Here is an unanswerable assurance, that if we do *not work*, we do not *believe*, as we *should* do. Surely, prodigious is the consolation, these wondrous words are capable of affording; that the *poorest* of the sons of men, if really a *Christian*, shall be owned by the Lord of Life and Glory, *as one of his brethren*! What plainer lessons of duty can we require? what stronger hopes of a reward, than when He absolutely tells us, that He is virtually with us, in the persons of his needy servants, our fellow-members of his body the Church? And yet how faithless, how ungrateful is the multitude? We who receive *our all*, our rich abundance of comforts and enjoyments at *his hands*, are slack to give him of *his own*; nay, to *lend* him; for it is plainly said, *He who glorieth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord*. Doth inhumanity, want of friendly counsel; neglect of religious information, discover any symptoms of that disposition which is to qualify us to lift up our eyes with joy when the trumpet sounds to *judgment*? They, whose consciences recoil, (and whose do *not* in *any* degree) let them hide the shame that naturally

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rally rises upon conviction, and *pray* most earnestly, that God *will soften and enlarge their hearts*.

Let us not build then, my brethren, on *any* religious hopes (most improperly, so called,) which leave the heart *cold*, and the hand *shut up* from exercising all manner of good works. For how, while *thus* inclined, is it possible *the love of God can dwell within us*?

O blessed Lord, and Master! how bountiful art Thou! and what a depth of merciful instruction dost thou convey to us in the subject of these meditations! what gracious warning do they supply, to profit by thy counsel, and strictly to observe it!

Having now shewn you, my brethren, in the fullest, and plainest manner I am able, *that it be loved Christ to suffer* (the innocent for the guilty,) and the various ways we are *benefited* by that suffering, and having also made a suitable application of this most serious and essential truth to our own faith, and practice, I shall conclude with a short, and earnest exhortation, which equally concerns ourselves, and every denomination of Christian people. *Let us consider continually, Him who suffered such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary, and faint in our minds*. Let us strive most diligently, to conform ourselves to the example Christ has set us. That *here* we may partake of that peace, which the world cannot give, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; and that by following his precepts, we may be prepared to *reign with Him for ever*. God of his infinite mercy grant, that this may be the happy lot of all who hear me,

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no less than of my own soul, for the sake of *Him who endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, to make intercession for us.* To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all majesty and praise, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

LUKE XXIV. 46.

And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.

IN my discourse to you last Friday, upon this most interesting subject, I confined myself to the explanation of the *former* part of this text. I endeavoured to convince you, in how many important points of view, it *behooved Christ to suffer*. The latter part of the verse is so closely connected with the former, and holds forth to us, such an *essential consequence*, as an object of our Christian faith; that I can conceive nothing more profitable for your information, and spiritual comfort at *this* time, than a plain examination of the truths it contains. I will therefore beg your attention at present, to the many satisfactory reasons, why it *behooved him to rise again from the dead the third day*.

This then, being the holy and joyful season, which is kept by all true Christians in remembrance of our Lord's resurrection from the dead; the most glorious and comfortable of all other seasons

- for frail mortals to celebrate, it may be useful to the improvement of your knowledge in this most essential article of the Christian religion, to discourse to you upon the *history*, and *effect*, of this blessed event. I proceed, then, to adopt my *usual* method at these *stated times*; and, as they yield an opportunity of conveying particular instruction, upon some important points of duty, which present themselves with additional force on these occasions, it would be more faulty to neglect them.

For this reason, after *first* affording you a short, and necessary history of the day, I will *secondly* take all the pains in my power, to convince you of the happy *end* it is calculated to produce; and, *thirdly*, I shall exhort you to apply *practically*, what is now delivered to you for the bettering of your lives, and advancing the work of your salvation. May God give his blessing to the attempt, for *his* sake, whose glorious triumph over death, we are now met to celebrate!

In the great and awful transaction of the former day, we have so lately commemorated, the heavy debt of sin was *paid*; the infinite justice of God was *satisfied* by an atonement of infinite mercy, no less than the sacrifice of the Son of God, in human nature, a mystery far exceeding our shallow powers to comprehend; it is enough for us, that the unerring wisdom of God had so ordained it; and hath revealed, as an article of our faith, and gratitude, that he is no longer at enmity with his creatures; that *He was in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself*; and that we are now in a capacity of being
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justified, and accepted, provided we despise not the *terms* of the covenant. It was indispensably necessary to the very *possibility* of our future happiness, that this debt should be discharged *for* us, because it was not possible, in the nature of things, that we could do it *ourselves*. Alas! *we had nothing to pay*; but from the miserable depravity of our constitution, were *adding* hourly to the debt. But still, a very essential article was requisite for our further support and comfort, and if it is allowable to employ a plain comparison, upon so solemn an occasion, we may observe, that though the *debt* was cancelled, yet the *receipt* remained to be *delivered* to us. The weakness of human nature required an acknowledgment, or *assurance*, *That the Son had made us free* INDEED; that God *approved* the ransom: and as all the works of the Most High are finished in wisdom, and perfection, so neither hath He left his creatures *without* this witness; and to this very end it plainly *behooved Christ to rise from the dead the third day*. But for this *testimony*, we might, as the Apostle observes, on a similar occasion, have justly been considered, *as of all men the most miserable*; and we have a strong instance of what would have been the *effect* of such a deficiency; from the wavering spirit of *some* of Christ's devoted followers, to whom he appeared after his resurrection, without *immediately* discovering himself unto them: *We trusted* (said they) *that it had been He, that should have redeemed Israel*, for to day is the THIRD day since these things were done; in which words they alluded to his promise of rising again, and of which, they plainly,

seemed to doubt. Again, how very necessary it was *that he should rise again*, may also be inferred from the suspicions, and vain endeavors of his plotting enemies, who, in their unbelief, and politic care to prevent delusion, foresaw the natural consequence of this extraordinary event. For, in this case, say they, to the governor, *The last error shall be worse than the first*; that is, if men believe *he is risen*, they assuredly will believe his *doctrine*. Now blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the history of the day hath given us full hope of our redemption, that God was pleased with the whole work of the Mediator, *For now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept*. To have been pardoned, to have been freed from the misery to which we were liable, through the degeneracy of our nature; and then to be consigned to endless oblivion, as though we had never existed, would have been but *half a blessing*; a work far short of that excellence which the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God was equal to obtain for us. His merits and interest, not only procured the *blotting out* the whole account against us, but an increase of greater riches than ever the creature possessed in *innocence*, the power to conquer all the wiles and dangerous assaults of our spiritual enemy, together with the invigorating, glorious prospect of *endless happiness*. *Thus is Christ become our righteousness*, and thus has his resurrection brought *life and immortality to light*.

In the history of this day, my brethren, we are presented with the mighty power of God, over all nature,

nature, with the fulfilling of his everlasting truth, which can never fail, and with the most condescending and compassionate provision for the future peace of all his faithful servants. It may be truly considered, as a religious feast, a time of the *greatest* joy to all Christians!

At the time of our Savior's *birth*, the *first* good news of what was to be expected was delivered. At his *crucifixion*, the *seal* was added to the work of *redemption*; but by his RESURRECTION, the *deed* is mercifully *completed*, and put into our *hands*, and all that is required of us to possess the valuable gifts contained in it, is to be *faithful* to the covenant *on our part*. *Miracle*, in every act, has stamped a value on the Messiah's mission. For the conception, *life*, and rising again of Christ, do all equally declare the hand of Omnipotence to be the Author.

It would profit but little, to detain you with relating the particulars of the dispute which long subsisted between the eastern Churches as to the *time* of keeping this feast: this is rather a subject for private study, than for the discussion of the pulpit. It may be sufficient for *your* knowledge on this head to be informed, that the thing itself was never doubted, and that by the regulations of the most famous of all the early Christian councils, it was settled that Easter should be kept on the *same* day throughout the Christian world, and that it should be always on the *Lord's day*.

To such of you as have duly attended to the *service* of the day, it will be needless, I hope, to *dwell* upon the particular, and miraculous circumstances that

that mark the *business* of it, and warrant our respectful veneration of this season: but that the most ignorant and inattentive may not depart without due satisfaction on this head, I will just remark, that dreadfully wanting indeed, must they be, who do not know what is needful for them to *believe* concerning the *literal* account of Christ's resurrection: viz. " That the eternal Son of God, " who was crucified and died for our sins, did not " long continue under the power of death, but on " the third day, by virtue of his own Divine Nature, did revive, and raise himself, by returning " with the same spirit to the same body which had " been killed and was buried, and so rose again the " same man."

It is equally unnecessary, I trust, to enlarge upon the *proof* of the fact, as this also has received abundant testimony in the Gospel of the day. On this head it will suffice to notice, that the power of eating and drinking with his disciples, as related in St. John xxi. 13. his frequent conversations with them as recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew and St. Mark; his shewing himself to five hundred brethren at once; his being seen afterwards by St. James; his appearing to St. Stephen at his martyrdom, and to St. Paul at his conversion, are each of them, indisputable testimonies, of this truth. But we have still another valuable confirmation of it, which is the evidence of his very *enemies*; the witnesses of those soldiers who watched the sepulchre, and pretended to keep his body from the hands of his Apostles; for they *shook and became as dead men,*

~~men~~, in the moment of his bursting the prison of the grave, and came and *shewed unto the chief priests, all the things that were done*; and to conclude this head, the very *angels* bore witness to the truth. One came and rolled back the stone from the *door and sat upon it* (saith St. Matthew;) *and two* (saith St. John) *sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain, said unto the woman, why do ye seek the living among the dead? he is not here but is risen.* In short, if you study the scriptures (which all speak of him) with true humility, and a desire to know the truth, God will enlighten your minds, and strengthen your hearts, to see, and believe, whatever relates to this wonderful event.

But what concerns us *chiefly*, my brethren, to consider, is *secondly*, the happy *end* our Savior's resurrection is calculated to produce, or why it was *expedient*; that is, in the words of my text, *Why it behoved him to rise from the dead the third day?* Now that Christ should rise again, was absolutely *necessary*, because, as the Apostle asserts, 1 Cor. xv. 17. *If Christ is not risen, ye are yet in your sins*; as also further, to fulfil his own predictions, and prove the divinity of his doctrine, and his person. If he had *not* risen again, (as he proposed this very article to the Jews, as a sign of his being a true Prophet, and the Son of God,) it would have convinced them that he was a *false* one, and an Impostor, by his failing to fulfil that *promise*; so that, to continue the Apostle's reasoning, *if Christ is not risen, our faith is vain*; but God having raised our Savior from the dead, after he was put to death for calling himself the

the Son of God, there cannot be a stronger testimony that he *was* his Son; and as he was, his doctrine consequently must be true as coming from God. And He rose on the *third* day particularly; for these two obvious reasons; (1.) To make good his own express declaration of the *time*, and (2.) to fulfil the prophecy concerning him by the royal Psalmist, *That God would not suffer his holy one to see corruption*; for, in the common course of nature, as his body was really dead, and of the same perishing matter with our own, had he continued *longer* in the grave, it might have seen corruption.

Further; The resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a cheering, powerful sign, of our *own* resurrection, in that it is the pledge or earnest of it. This argument is finely and clearly handled by St. Paul, in the chapter appointed for our burial service, 1 Cor. xv. 36. *That which thou sowest* (says the Apostle) *is not quickened except it die*; and indeed this whole subject affords a lively application, by referring you to the nature of the present renovating season, and to the process of the very profession that most of you follow, who now hear me. For *now*, my brethren, is your *earthly* seed time, and ye are very properly careful not to *lose* it; it furnishes a most significant memorandum of the indispensable vigilance in spiritual labor, for if we *sow* not, *neither can we reap*. And as sure as it is necessary to prepare for the returns of *harvest*, so it is no less expedient for you to *sow* for ETERNITY. *This life*, is the seed time for what we are to reap in that endless state of being; and if we *sow* not to virtue, and true holiness, we

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shall find nothing but poverty in that day, to our immortal souls. For as every seed has its own proper food, so will be the reward of our works: if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption, but if we sow unto the spirit, we shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. (And here I may fairly appeal to every serious person, whether the letting our earthly sowing stand still one hour in honor of one day, in the whole year; in honor of HIM, who made all things, and who alone provideth, and blesteth all we have, would in the least endanger the increase of our worldly industry; or whether because He has promised that seed time and harvest shall never fail, and that he sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust, it is either wise, or grateful, to neglect that work, for which alone we were sent into the world, viz. the glory of God and the care of our souls?

That then, which we are chiefly to learn from the due observance of this day, and the contemplation of our Saviour's resurrection, is the strengthening the faith of our holy religion. To hasten and perfect our repentance, since we are now confirmed in the certainty of the fruits of it, and to apply to HIM, to whom all power in heaven and earth is now committed, to fill our hearts with every needful grace, that we may know the power of his resurrection now, and attain to the resurrection of the dead hereafter, Phil. iii. 10, 11.

Now of all the graces which the influence of the Holy Spirit bestows, to qualify us for the divine favor, Charity is the chief. Love (says the Apostle, Rom. xiii. 10) is the fulfilling of the law. It may be
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no unprofitable exercise; therefore, in this place; to take a view of the false, and partial judgment people are apt to make, when they *think*, or *speak* of the history of this season without a qualifying allowance for the common weakness and depravity of human nature. From the affecting letter of the story, and the unhappy perverseness of the Jews, we are generally inclined to be *very severe* against *them*. But in our judgment in this particular case, we should always suffer Christian charity to guide us, and consider what prejudices, and expectations they laboured under. They had been misled, (the multitude at least) to interpret their scriptures *literally* and in a *worldly* sense, and surely it was not more extraordinary, that they should be deceived by such views THEN, than that we are *now* so terribly enslaved by temporal wishes; for the hearts of all men *naturally* are closer set on this life's goods, than on things above. The worldly-minded, of course, rejected the humbling message of *such* a Saviour, whose appearance differed so very widely from their hearts desire, and what they had been taught to look for.

This then being the case of people blinded by splendid hopes, it is therefore properly said; that *to the poor the Gospel is preached*. Not as positively excluding those whom the Providence of God has placed in higher stations; not to the poor in the mere *literal* sense of the expression, but only to declare the *peculiar principle* of Christ's religion. To all who were poor in an *evangelical* sense; that is, *poor in spirit*, not *high-minded*; but willing to receive the

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the truth in God's *own way*. To all who felt themselves *so poor* without these *glad tidings* Jesus Christ delivered to them (which is the very meaning of the word Gospel) as to engage them earnestly to *desire* it, as their chief happiness, and comfort. And so far indeed, the circumstance of *outward* poverty leads *some* the readier to embrace the word; because being void of the various gratifications which power and riches yield, they naturally require some *inward* consolation to bear them up against the difficulties with which they struggle. They are not equally exposed to the delusions of captivating wealth, but look up to the *Creator*, more than the *Creature*, for support. Therefore, though the Gospel is more generally said *to be preached to the poor*; in that, for these reasons, *they* are more likely to *receive* it, yet it is, and ever will be, equally accepted by the rich of this world also, who are duly sensible of the poverty of their degenerated nature, and disposed to hear the words of eternal life; for even in our Savior's alarming remark, *how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*; yet he by no means *excludes* the wealthy; for he adds, that *nothing is impossible with God*, and only shews the *danger* of their situation, and the *difficulty* of their conversion, comparatively with the less prosperous condition of life: and if we make a strict examination of the characters that prove the truest converts unto God, we shall always find them the *penitent*, the *lowly*, and the *contrite*, in any class of people.

There is likewise *another* consideration, which if duly weighed, will help to humble, and try us. *We*,
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have various *additional* proofs, to what the Jews enjoyed: for we have (1.) The miraculous preservation of all their prophecies. (2.) The curious and convincing case of their own rejection from being an established *people*. (3.) The history of Christ recorded so *minutely*, by many different hands, yet all combining to fix the *truth* of it. And (4.) the perfect preservation, and astonishing effect of the Gospel itself, is, in a manner among the greatest miracles that ever happened. Well therefore, may we enquire, with surprise, how, notwithstanding all these great and precious advantages, men continue indisposed to believe the truth? Why many Christians are as slack as Jews to pay due honor to their Founder's cause? The reason is manifest. They are blinded by an influence more suited to their carnal nature. They *will not see*, lest they should *repent, and be converted*, for then, they must part with their beloved vices, and set loose to all the vain attachments of this wicked and uncertain scene. These hold them in chains, which nothing can break, but deep conviction of the truth as it is in *Jesus Christ*. He came to take down the mighty from their seat of vanity, and to exalt the humble and meek to a throne of glory. And when once this powerful light is suffered to shine upon the soul, (for doubtless many do *wisely* shut their eyes against it) the mind becomes divested of the blindness above-mentioned; the veil is removed, and things begin to wear their proper colours. But the heart is so deceitful, and corrupt by nature, and the mind so dull, till this change takes place, that

that as soon might you bring water from the flinty rock, as expect true conversion to God, 'till the softening quality of his heavenly grace, hath made impression on this stubborn heart. And this grand work, his mercy is producing every day, in various shapes, for the enlightening and saving his benighted creatures.

From what has now been delivered to you, upon these inveterate prejudices of the Jewish nation, against the humble appearance, and low condition of our Savior, it may be profitable to add some *further* remarks, which will confirm the absolute *necessity* of his coming in a manner so *different* from their wish, and expectation. But these I shall defer till we meet in the afternoon, and conclude at present (as is my general custom) with a short, and earnest exhortation upon the solemn service which we are now about to celebrate. Depend upon it, my brethren, that what our Lord and Savior Christ has positively *commanded*, must duly be *obeyed*; or we cannot *truly* call ourselves his *faithful followers*. We may assure ourselves also he would never have appointed what was not *essentially profitable* for ALL his servants. I have so often pressed this argument, and placed it in so many points of view, that I am really at a loss how to persuade you further on the subject, without repeating the same inducements to your obedience. This, however, is most certain, that it is indispensably binding on every minister to enforce respect to *all* Christ's ordinances: to neglect to do so, in *any* particular, would be a *silent* acknowledgment that such particular point,

was matter of *indifference*. I consider it, therefore, both my duty, and interest, (as I must answer for having neglected or discharged a faithful trust) to remind you constantly of this very thing, that no part of your final condemnation may be placed to my account. Conscious myself, of the absolute necessity of *repentance*, and *reformation*, I urge them upon you, as becomes my office, and from the purest regard for your eternal welfare. Convinced that human nature of itself is terribly corrupted, I would lead you to the *readiest* means of changing your impure affections into *holiness of life*. This, my brethren, can only be accomplished by God's assistance, or what is called in scripture language, the power of his grace. This free gift, and mighty favor, our heavenly Father holds out to *all* who will accept the necessary conditions of our Savior's Gospel. And further; that his frail creatures, might want no manner of encouragement to set about a work so very essential to their greatest good, and to which weak flesh and blood is not of itself sufficient; in the riches of his mercy, He hath appointed *outward means* to help their imperfect powers towards a change so very needful to prepare them for his presence, and the joys of heaven. In the Sacraments of Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord, we have *actual* signs and pledges of the graces meant to be conveyed to every humble, and faithful Christian. By complying with the commands to use these means of grace, you prevail on God (for his Son's sake, and merits) to bestow such strength upon you, as will abundantly support you, under
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the various trials to which, in the common course of nature, every human creature must be subject. Refuse not, then, my brethren, the tender counsel of those *who watch for your souls*. While you have time, make a wise and grateful use of those *repeated calls* to work out your salvation. Remember, the night cometh (even upon the youngest) when they shall not be able to work; and as this cannot be doubted, what shall the *aged* do? *They* have much less leisure to spare, or trifle away; they can never be too earnest in redeeming their mis-spent time. People must not deceive themselves with thinking, that though they have slighted the especial means of grace held out to them in the holy Sacrament, it will act as a *charm* at LAST, to reform them in a *moment*, or atone completely for all their long, and wilful disrespect to Christ's injunctions. On the contrary, they should carefully consider the *preparation* necessary, to *fit* them to partake of what the Lord in tenderest mercy has provided for their *cure*; and this is the plainest thing in nature. It is only a *real wish* to *mend*, in every particular of their conduct, wherein they are consciously *deficient*. Now this naturally implies *conviction*, that they need *help*; and the method to *obtain* it, must obviously be the exercise of every portion of power or grace a man already possesses. This will strengthen faith according to God's positive promise; *He that doth his will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God*. This, then, it behoveth us to tell you, that though it is most dangerous to defer repentance, because no man knoweth the day or hour of his being called

to account ; it is better to begin even *late*, than *not at all*. Too diligent and wary it is impossible for any of us to be ; or too grateful that we have *life*, and *senses*, and some *hope* of further reprieve, to prove our sorrow, and amendment. It is for the sake of any, who are so happy as to feel in their hearts, the motion of God's grace, prompting them now to join their fellow-christians in their bounden duty, (even after a long and inexcusable neglect) that I so repeatedly declare my sincere willingness to give all such every possible instruction they can *wish*, whenever they call upon me for that good purpose. And to prevent all excuses, and encourage every pious *endeavor*, I think it proper to add, that I shall never consider such applications as an intrusion on my leisure, or an unbecoming liberty on *their* part, but a pleasing, and happy opportunity of being instrumental both to their present, and future peace. In truth, for what other purpose is my solemn appointment among you, but as a *zealous, honest, affectionate watchman* for your most important interests ? or what more delightful, and glorious object can I propose to *myself*, than the mutual welfare of your immortal souls ? Take notice, then, my brethren, that you have none of you any plea for continuing in *ignorance*, of this, or any other Christian duty ; in case it happens that you cannot *retain*, or thoroughly understand, the several arguments delivered for your information from *this* place. And as for those who are so blessed as to *see* the necessity of complying with their Lord's commands, who have obtained grace to live in the

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habit of *dutiful obedience* in this respect, let them beware not to slacken in their labor of love; God knows, the very *best* need *every help*. We cannot *too often remember* Christ; the more we *dwell* upon his sufferings, the more we shall be sensible of our *wants*, and great unworthiness, and that *it behoved him to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification*. Only, my dear friends, ponder this weighty truth, in what manner we are to be employed in his heavenly kingdom, (if we truly desire to have any share in the merits of his death) and it will powerfully assist to reproach our present lukewarmness, and urge us to future circumspection. If our eternal employment is to be in contemplating the wondrous mercy of our Deliverer, and adoring and exalting his glorious Name, is it possible, my brethren, that we can be too *frequent*, or too *fond* of doing *now*, what is to prepare us for our heavenly task, and to form our highest happiness to endless ages?

Soon, to every one of us, will the trials, pleasures, and temptations of this fleeting scene be over. O, let us not waste and lose the precious, glorious opportunity of being made inheritors of unmixed, unfading, and eternal happiness! When the sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars refuse to give their light; when the earth shall be burnt up, and as a scroll, the material heavens pass away; when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and we shall see the power of Christ's resurrection, in the experience of our *own*; O, how shall we then rejoice, for having used the

present means God's wisdom has designed to fit us for the enjoyment of that endless day! How will many sorrow for the past and rash *neglect*, that will consign them over to perpetual darkness! where there is no more reproof, no possible remedy, no further trial, but the merited sentence upon wilful obstinacy, to increase eternal lamentation, and despair. May these most serious thoughts dispose us to be cautious, humble, and most diligent in striving to secure a blessed portion when we depart this life. May God bless this means of grace appointed by his Beloved Son, in this most holy Sacrament, to the refreshing of our souls, and the improvement of our lives; and may all present experience a timely desire to do his will in all things, nor any longer decline the proffered occasion of instruction and amendment. To God, be all the praise for every gift and power we enjoy, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.

SERMON IX.

FOR EASTER-DAY EVENING.

The same Text.

HAVING finished the *first* division of my subject, in my former discourse, wherein I delivered such a history of the day, as I judged useful for many of my hearers : it remains now, that I proceed to the *second* head I purposed to consider, and which I cut short on account of the additional service in the morning. In order to give weight to the several observations I was led to make, upon the conduct of the Jews of old, towards our Blessed Savior ; it would be serviceable to fix this following serious, and undeniable truth upon our minds, that though we were not *personally* assisting at Christ's *death*, and that we are ready to revile the people of the Jews for such an inhuman, and unprecedented act, as destroying an innocent person, and their *Benefactor*, one who did so much good among them, and intended them a great deal more ; yet even at this distance of time, many who *call themselves Christians* (that is, the pretending and professing followers of this murdered Savior,) may yet be guilty of a crime as wicked towards *Him*,

and as dangerous to their *eternal welfare*, as ever the perverse and cruel conduct of the Jews can be esteemed. To preserve us then from this uncharitable liberty, and to secure ourselves from being guilty of a crime we justly reprobate; we should carefully attend to the *ground* of our Savior's prayer for their forgiveness. *Father, forgive them, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO.* Now, this cannot be truly said in our case; for we, in our unholy, and wicked lives, are thoroughly acquainted with the *consequence* of the particular sins we are committing. *We* have been born and educated under the influence of Christ's own regenerating ordinances. *Baptism*, the first, we have all received; and though we miserably *abuse* it, by not attending to the vows then solemnly promised, and thereby grieve, and resist the Holy Spirit of Grace; yet the *other*, is still held out to us, as a means to *renew* these vows, and repair our errors by *repentance*. But alas! it seems as if we are too apt to think a *little* of this grace is sufficient for us, by our negligence to *increase* it; for the remedy is appointed to be followed up, till our disorders are *corrected*, till our cure is as complete as possibly it can be. While therefore we neglect, or otherwise abuse these means of grace, the fault can only be attributed to *ourselves*. And by continuing in any foul offences, which Christ has warned us from committing, we do, as the Apostle says, *thereby put the Lord to open shame*, and in a manner *crucify him afresh*. In other words, all such persons do give occasion to the profane, to call in question the effects of Christ's dying.

dying, and the regenerating power of his grace, whereby his holy name is scandalously dishonored; the virtue of his religion lowered by the unconverted, hardened sinner; and the gracious purposes for which Christ died, ungratefully opposed. These points are highly worthy our consideration; they plainly shew how culpable all merely *nominal* Christians are, of the very charge for which they accuse the Jews, and likewise, that the benefits of Christ's death can only be applied to those, who *wish* to serve him *truly*, and *prove* that they have obtained an interest in him, by the demonstration of his Spirit, on their *lives*, and *conversation*.

Having premised this needful check to all unguarded severity; and furnished an exhortation to watch our *own* proneness to offend; in continuation of the farther observations I was led to make upon the conduct of the Jews, in rejecting their King, and Savior, on account of the *mean and humble figure* he made among them, I am *now* to shew you, the *absolute necessity* of Christ's coming in a manner so *very different*, from their *wish* and *expectation*.

First, then; had our Lord appeared, with all the vain bewitching pomps of this world, where would have been any proper trial for the *Rich*? or any difficulty of enlisting under his banner? He must then have employed the usual means of gratifying his followers, which *temporal* potentates adopt, to secure *their interests*, viz. the tempting effects of power, and splendor, and which men too often covet at the risk of their own souls. Nay, *all* would not have been equally contented even *then*:
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this would have afforded ground for *envy*, and *ambition*, instead of universal *love*, and *self-denial*, *patient suffering*, and *continuance in well-doing*. The effects of *faith*, and *hope*, would have had no share in his disciples happiness. Instead of *their affections being set on things above* (the supporting objects of those divine virtues) they would have been divided between *things on earth*, if not wholly absorbed by them. But Christ came to *save* souls, and not to countenance the *loss* of them. He came to prove, that the ways men so eagerly pursue, to obtain happiness *here*, are *false* and *dangerous*, and generally quite the contrary of what should be attended to, in order to inherit *life eternal*. He came to propose a life of *faith*, and humble confidence in God's promised blessings, upon condition of *sincere obedience* to his *precepts*. In short, He openly declared, *his kingdom was not of this world*; and therefore we cannot wonder that persons *wholly devoted* to this world, (whether Jews, or Gentiles) should undervalue and reject his offers.

But to keep to the application I designed in the comparison; we must all confess, that the character of the present times, in regard to many nominal Christians, varies but little from the spirit that possessed the unbelieving Jews. For as the *latter* would gladly have received Christ, had he come in the demonstration of *earthly* power; so many among ourselves, are better pleased to have *smooth things* told them, however *false*, than to hear the truth as it is in Jesus, though a portion of the glories

glories to be revealed, is a reward of their receiving, and obeying it in godliness.

For example ; many are eager enough to embrace a Savior who has so done all things for them, that they may sin securely ; they are anxious to be *saved*, because no man loves *pain*, or *misery* of *any* kind ; but the leaven of carnal desires prevents them from admitting and digesting the only method to avoid it. The *entering in at the strait gate* ; the *taking up the cross daily* ; these are desperate hindrances. They would fain retain a possibility of continuing in the pleasures of sin, that the grace of God may be more magnified, by an *excess of mercy*. But why should men be so unreasonably absurd, as to desire *impossibilities* ? What *greater* test of favor can we require, than to receive *free pardon*, which we are told we stand in need of, after the *best* we do, for we cannot be insensible we are truly *unprofitable servants* to an all-powerful, and perfect Being, in respect to any intrinsic value of our deeds. And as God has graciously promised not only to accept, but to reward, our imperfect services, surely to be *faithful* to our utmost, is no *indifferent* thing, when *sincerity* is made the absolute condition of the favor. Surely, it is mercy in the extreme, to have respect to any good that we can do, and for which he graciously affords the *power* of performance. In short, such people would wish to gain heaven without any hard trial, without a struggle of repentance, or self-denying acts. This would be to expect what is contrary to the whole history of the life of Christ ; of his Apostles ; and the experience of every humble
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Christian that ever lived. Thus doth the Tempter beguile, and ensnare the multitude. They are unwilling to distinguish between the sin of original depravity, that infirmity to which universal nature is heir, and which is atoned for by the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ (through faith;) and that *wilful* impiety, and *actual* transgression, which needs continually, the *assisting* power of grace to *check* it. The hardships which offer themselves to worldly minds, incline them to confound what Christ hath done *for* us, with what He must do *in* us. By endeavoring to exalt the power of *Grace*, they render void its peculiar office, and most blessed *effects*, which is to make us *holy*, that we may be *capable* of being happy. But as soon shall light and darkness dwell together; as soon shall the same fountain yield sweet, and bitter water, or God and Belial unite in principle, as that the *wilful habitual* sinner, can have any interest in the blood of Christ. All who continue *perversely vicious, unjust, or otherwise ungodly*, depending upon Jesus for a *Redeemer*, without receiving him as a *Lawgiver*; without shewing any of the fruits of his Holy Spirit, which are to qualify them for the welcome of *well done good and faithful servant*; all such, instead of *entering into the joy of their Lord*, will be miserably disappointed, and confounded with the sentence that is recorded, *Rev. xxii. 11. Let him that is filthy, be filthy still; and him that is unjust, be unjust still. He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still*; that is, in whatsoever evil *habits* a man is found, at the hour of his *death*, the same shall attend

attend him *to all eternity*; and consequently, most indispensable, and safe, is the cultivation of every *virtuous, and pious* practice.

Repentance, and faith, my brethren, are the plain and saving conditions of the Gospel; they are virtues we must possess in a certain degree, and the less we *have* of them, the more we must *pray* for them. They are confirmed to us by the never-failing credentials of the Apostle's preaching: that is, faith in the Son of God; that through the power of His resurrection from the dead, he is mighty to save all those who come to him, (however burthened) when they *confess*, and feel *weary* of their sins. We must possess a belief, that for *his sake*, and through Him *only*, redemption can be obtained; and that by the grace he has taught us to ask, and hope for, he will enable us to gain such a degree of victory over this weak corrupted nature, as shall produce fruits demonstrative of pure repentance. And in truth, if this is *not so*, how can we be judged by our *works*. Observe, however, we do not assert that works, of themselves, *merit* any favor of God; or that actions performed under the influence of any *partial affection*, are capable of *reconciling* God to us, but confess that we are accepted for HIS sake only, who supplies the will and the power to do all manner of genuine good; yet we maintain that they must *appear*, because they are the earnest, or pledges of our partaking of his spirit HERE, and the *seals*, by which all true disciples shall be distinguished HEREAFTER; *for without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. Therefore, *call* it what you please, only take special care, my brethren, that you
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be found among the number that *have* this unction of the Spirit upon your hearts : wherefore *putting away all ungodliness and fleshly lusts that war against the soul, strive to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.* Beware of being deceived by doctrines which seem to favor the impossibility of a virtuous life, or of its needful preparation for future happiness ; for this is truly, as the Apostle terms it, a most *damnable doctrine, the doctrine of devils.* Be not so absurd, as to suppose a care to please God, and live according to his word, will interfere with the *merits* of your Savior, or lessen the *value* of his sufferings ; for he died on purpose to *enable* you *so* to *live* ; and the more you act up to the spirit of the Gospel, the more you prove the blessed *effect* of his death, and resurrection on your souls, who has thus *raised you from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness,* by faith in what he has done for you ; and which is the best of all assurances you can possibly have, that He *will raise you up at the last day.* Keep constantly in mind, the parable of the *talents*, whenever you are in danger of becoming slothful, or unfaithful to your trust. Beware of listening to the prejudices of any favorite errors. This was the failing of the Jews. Men are naturally inclined to *disbelieve*, what they do not *like.* Our fallen state disposeth us to be averse from actual righteousness, and therefore many catch at every deception that would persuade them they may be safe without the *practice* of it. But *we,* I trust, *have not so learned Christ,* my brethren, as to suppose his resurrection hath wrought for us no *better knowledge, - and ability.* Let us rather abide by
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the safe testimony of St. John ; *Little children, let no man deceive you ; he that doth good, is of God, and he that doth evil is of the Devil.* I would not so affront your *understanding*, as to trespass with an explanation of good, and evil.

I will beg your patience to one more remark; which I omitted in its proper place, but which the history of the day presents to us as very worthy our serious notice. This may be depended on, as an everlasting truth, that in proportion as men of every description yield to worldly, and selfish principles, they will be gradually weaned from the love of what is true, and just. This is particularly instanced in the conduct of the watch that were appointed to guard our Savior's sepulchre, and who were actual witnesses of the preternatural appearance that honored his resurrection. They basely accepted of a *bribe*, to deny the *truth*, and added a most atrocious falsehood to this their heavy crime ; for they affirmed, that the body of Jesus was taken away by his disciples, WHILE THEY SLEPT. In any other case, but one of such an awful nature ; in any other trespass, not attended with such shocking consequences to the offending party, it would be allowable to hold up such perverse blindness, and excess of folly, as the object of worthy *ridicule*. For what could be more absurd, than to expect to establish a fact by the testimony of persons who *owned themselves asleep* ; but inconsistent as this is, the history tells us, *that this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day.* Now, however ready we may be in wishing to expose the error of these people, we should

should not be over anxious to boast our own affectionate zeal, at the expence even of their most unworthy conduct, but rather consider it in the light I intimated in my first discourse, as a woeful instance of the general depravity of mankind; for it must be very evident, that the principle that actuated these unhappy people, both to invent, and to persist in such a falsehood, was this:—they bowed, like too many of their richer brethren, to the god of this world; to the power of *gold*. We must suppose them from their very employment, of the very lowest and worst educated of the people, who, from this disadvantage, and the temptation of *gain*, were like too many of the lower class of all nations, unmindful of the true, and greatest riches. They were not affected even by a *miracle*; by a miracle that rendered them as *dead men with fear*. They were so blinded by *prejudice*, and over-ruled by the desire of *selfish gain*, that they felt no ways concerned in these affairs, but turned the truth, which might have proved their everlasting glory, into a lie, that helped to make them two-fold more the children of their father, the devil, than they were before. *Great*, doubtless, was their *sin*: but instead of flattering ourselves that we should never have been guilty of such foul misconduct; instead of loading them with bitter reproaches; let us build up our faith upon their very error; let the rashness of *their* transgression, excite us to this profitable meditation.

Gracious God! What a sinful, hardened, ungrateful, wretched creature is man, 'till he experiences

riences the regenerating influence of the Spirit of truth, and life upon his heart ! 'till he begins to see himself in the true colours of his fallen state, and 'till he strives by the same good spirit to *prove* himself a new creature, by an uniform course of repentance, and amendment ! 'Till, then, we are liable to every error we condemn in *others* : 'till this *change* takes place, people are ignorant that they are under the dominion of sin, and in danger of perishing ; and while in this state of darkness, was the tragedy to be repeated now, we should take the same unfeeling part in it, as justly branded the Jews with infamy, however loud we are in reprobating the gross and personal indignities our Blessed Master suffered at their hands !

Let this dispose us to self-examination, and guard us from incurring equal guilt ; for it is a truth we cannot too much cherish, that if we pass our lives as if there is no account hereafter to be given ; as if it be indifferent what we do, so *Christ has died, and is risen again*, and that it is enough we were not *personally* assisting, or consenting to his sufferings. If we indulge a supposition, that these *outward* acts of our Redeemer's righteousness exclude the necessity of an uniform Christian life, and that the refreshing beams of the *Sun of Righteousness*, are needless to be *felt* upon our souls, and to be visible in our *actions*. If we build hope that since by the sacrifice of himself, and because all power is given him in heaven and earth, he will therefore equally save all who call upon his name, whether *careless*, or *active* servants. If we harbour such

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thoughts as these (my brethren) which consequently produce a very *different* life from what the Gospel orders, we do effectually deny the most essential testimony of our Savior's resurrection, and the living proofs that God requires of our *own*: for this is the argument held out by the Apostle, Rom. vi. 3. *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, (that is, that have been initiated into his church by virtue of his sacrament of baptism) were baptised into his death (or are dead to sin) in other words, have vowed to forsake sin; therefore like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* And in proof of the necessity of this *renewal* of our nature, it will be worth your while to study often, the reasoning of this whole chapter. For this is the test required, *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* Col. iii. 1, 2, 3.

It is now time we should attend to that last consideration which the text suggests to us, as the most important article to be enforced of any; but this I need not *dwell* upon, as by an uniform regard to the necessity of the *change*, it was intended to effect, we shall become wise unto salvation, and our end will be everlasting life. 4

This then is the principal design of the doctrine of the resurrection; to excite us to the practice of genuine piety, that we may joy in the prospect of the resurrection of our bodies at the last day;

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and that when Christ our life shall appear, we may then also appear with Him in glory. And as it behoved Christ to rise again the third day, to establish this hope in us, so doth it behove us, to live according to it, that being made free from sin (having obtained the promised power to subdue its growth) we should become the servants of righteousness; and as we have heretofore yielded our members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, so now, we should, by repentance, and faith in this plentiful redemption, yield them servants to true holiness.

And in like manner as our Blessed Lord adduced God's own proof of the immortality of the soul, by saying to his people of old, by his servant Moses, *I am not the God of the dead, but of the living;* so we should apply our Savior's own words as to our spiritual life, while in the body, and say, most truly, *you err, not knowing the scriptures,* to all who are so dead to the spirit of the Gospel, as to imagine, that without conforming to the image and example of our divine Teacher, they can have any share in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Let your constant endeavor, therefore, my brethren, be to direct your lives by the rules our Lord has delivered for that purpose, both in his own doctrine, and that of his Apostles, inspired by his Holy Spirit to support, and spread the power of that doctrine among all nations. Profligate persons, like persons in danger of drowning, are eager to catch at any possible hope of safety, and thus the author of sin encourages his servants to venture fatal lengths, 'till there is no possibility of their escape.

escape. It is for the interest of *his* kingdom, that men should mistake the truth; and the case of all such is strongly pictured by the Apostle, 2 Thess. ii. 7. &c. *For the mystery of iniquity doth always work, (says he) only He who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all DECEITFULNESS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in ungodliness.* And he concludes with the alarming visitation I have all along been warning you to avoid, (and for this cause,) that as they delight in sin, *God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie.* You cannot fail to see clearly, my brethren, that this delusion is a *punishment* to those, who continue in perverse wickedness, hoping, (most profanely,) that *grace may abound in a free pardon, notwithstanding their wilful provocations.* But let us, my friends, take courage from the Apostle's conclusive exhortation: *Comfort your hearts, and stablish yourselves, in every good word and work by faith and trust in God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Rely on God's own word, that *there is no peace to the wicked, but that they are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, but which casteth up mire and dirt;* that is, their conscience is continually alarming them with the remembrance of their evil deeds, and points out to them the terror that awaits them in a future state. And bad as *this is,* where it
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is *not* the case, their fate is still more desperate, for if the conscience is *seared*, there is too great reason to fear, either that they are wholly unawakened and unconverted, or that their day of grace is *past*, and that *they are reprobate*. On the contrary, *the way of the upright man is peace*. Pray then, and strive most earnestly, my brethren, to acquaint yourselves with God, and to be at peace, for that attendeth every man that worketh good. Depend upon the word of one, whose eternal interest rests on *not* *deceiving* you, that a course of worldly vanity, sinful pleasures, and disregard of the *power* of religion on the heart, will produce nothing but *perplexity, doubt, and a fearful looking for what must come hereafter*; whereas, an uniform life of *temperance, soberness, and chastity*, a sincere obedience to God's commands, in which consists the *true beauty of holiness*, and an humble trust in his mercy, through Christ, to pardon the weakness and imperfections of the very best exertions, is what will bring you the truest peace at the last.

Christ indeed is *risen from the dead*, whether men will apply the benefits of it, by humble earnest prayer for them, or continue to live in darkness, and He is as truly *become the first fruits of them that slept*, and finally shall return to shew the conclusive power of his triumph, whether men will believe it or not. But notwithstanding all this, it is as much as our souls are worth, to reflect, that by our wicked pursuits we very much hinder the effects which these truths are intended to produce on all

who hear them. For though we do not endeavor to persuade men in positive terms, that Christ is *not* risen, and that they need not fear the *consequence* of their own resurrection, yet we do it by a much stronger evidence, if we shew it in our *actions*. We certainly declare our unbelief by our evil lives, since in proportion as we live in downright contradiction to that spirit which asserts that *Christ came to destroy sin in the body*, we deny both the truth and power of his resurrection. For if we possess no inward principle to prevent our living in sin; if it is not absolutely necessary that we should in due measure crucify the sinful lusts and affections of the flesh; then, neither will Christ's resurrection or our own, be of any essential value to us, but the *contrary*, because in such a case, we shall only rise again to *condemnation*, unless it can be shewn (which even the folly and madness of sin will not attempt to prove) that God will *equally* bless the resurrection of the godly, and unrighteous, and receive the *latter*, as though they had passed their day of trial in the exercise of *holiness*. If it is *so*, there can be no sense or meaning, in *Well done good and faithful servant*. I repeat, my brethren, not even the folly and madness of vice, will dare to defend so gross a falsehood.

May God preserve us from harbouring any such unchristian, and dangerous notions; and so fill us with the grace of his Holy Spirit, that we may know, and feel the truth, and practice it in the purity Christ hath taught it; for whose merit's
sake

fake alone we hope for mercy at his second coming, and assurance *now* through faith in the promise, and uniform *obedience to his will*.

To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all the praise and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

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SERMON X.

ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM lxxviii. 18,

Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men: yea even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

THESE words are taken from one of the particular Psalms appointed by the Church for the service of Whitsunday; but the history and miraculous business of *that* day being so closely connected with the glorious circumstance we are now met to celebrate, I have judged the text peculiarly applicable to *both* occasions. It will certainly afford abundant matter of instruction, if we enter fully into an explanation of these interesting words, and dwell with minute, and due attention upon the happy consequences of Christ's *ascension*, since by this triumph over his enemies, such mighty power and benefits have been derived to all, who truly trust in his most holy Name.

The blessed event, then, of our Lord's ascension into glory, completes the chain of wondrous circumstances

cumstances which attended His personal office upon earth. In the annunciation of his being *to come in the flesh*, He is honored by the proclamation of an *Angel*, with the title of the SON OF GOD. At the stated period of his *entering* this world of sorrow, the same Heavenly Embassy is commissioned to promise *peace on earth, and good will towards men*, in the name of JESUS. The history of his *life*, supplies abundant confirmation of the *truth* of his title, and the effects of his *power*. He is declared by a voice from Heaven, *to be God's beloved Son in whom he is well pleased*. From his youth to his entering upon his public ministry, He increased in *wisdom and in favor with God and men*. The active scenes of his sojourning below, were continually marked *with doing good*, in marvellous exertions of divine power, and mercy. By his *death*, he sealed to us the benefits designed by God, for fallen creatures, before the world was made. Even in torments, he prayed for his murderers; by his *resurrection*, he strengthened the hope of his suffering followers, so as to render their cross light, and even *pleasant* to them. And *here*, in his ASCENSION, he still added vigor to their faith; since according to his own former promise, he gave his Apostles, not only *positive evidence* of seeing him ascend up on high, but he sanctified it by this conclusive testimony, in the miraculous appearance of part of the heavenly host, who assured his wondering, and lamenting friends, *that the same Jesus which was taken from them into Heaven, should so come again, in like manner as they saw him go into Heaven*.

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The Psalm from whence this text is taken, is supposed to have been composed upon the joyful occasion of removing the ark of God to Mount Sion. The account of this you have at large in 2 Sam. ch. vi; as also in the 1 Chron. ch. xv. There can be no doubt, but David, under this figure of the ark's ascent, prophetically describes the exaltation of Christ the Messiah as on this day; who was *the mighty power and glory of God*, in the fullest sense that can be represented. In the very first verse of the Psalm, the Royal Prophet foretels Christ's going up on high, and the triumph of his victory over sin and death. *Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; let them also that hate him flee before him.* And St. Paul likewise, considering the words of the text in a figurative light, has applied them expressly to our Blessed Savior, in Eph. iv. 8. where he attributes every degree of grace experienced by all Christians, as the happy effects of Christ's ascension. *For (says he) unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ; wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.*

The ark of God, in a *literal* sense, was that holy chest, wherein were kept the two tables of stone, on which were written the ten commandments; Aaron's miraculous rod; and the pot of manna; as a testimony for ever to the people of Israel, of God's power, and presence with them. This ark was covered with pure gold; at the ends of it were fixed figures of the cherubims, of the same metal, these extending their wings over it, seemed to form
a throne

a throne for the majesty of God, and which by way of distinction, was called the **MERCY-SEAT**. This also was considered as a remarkable *figure* of Christ, for it being likewise called the **PROPITIATORY**, the Apostle alludes to this signification of it in Rom. iii. 25. where he terms *Christ our Propitiation set forth by God, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*. Thus Christ is represented under the above figure, as interposing, and mediating for us, between God our Judge, and the law, by which we stand condemned, and accursed. And in this sense, (as a late pious and most valuable prelate of our own church expresses it, in his evangelical commentary on this very passage,) “ Christ is
 “ the *true* ark, on which the glory rested, who per-
 “ sonally ascended up to the highest heaven, led
 “ captivity captive, by triumphing over his con-
 “ quered enemies, and having received gifts from
 “ his heavenly Father, as the fruits of his victory,
 “ gave them unto men, as was most conducive to
 “ the establishment of his Church, that the Lord
 “ God might dwell among them.”

We will now proceed to consider the words of the text in a more *distinct*, and *closer* meaning, that is, as they may be applied to the case of *individuals*, no less, than to whole *bodies* of Christians, from which endeavor, I hope to establish both you that hear me, and myself, in the needful consolation they are calculated to convey, to every one in this state of pilgrimage upon earth. To this end, then, I shall divide the text into separate heads, and enlarge

enlarge upon the evangelical sense, that each of them contains, so as to afford us all the spiritual instruction that can be derived from such a study. This will form the subject of my *first* discourse; and in the *second*, I shall treat the words as they more particularly refer to the immediate descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, the miraculous powers conferred upon them at that time, and the future benefits implied in the promise of sending the Comforter unto them. This will more properly supply instruction for the Sunday following.

The text consists of five separate sentences, each of them declaring a circumstance most highly worthy our attention, since in the completion of them all, we have the greatest interest both now, and to all eternity.

First; *thou art ascended, or gone up on high*. Here, the Christian is provided with the most blessed, and needful assurance that his heart can wish, that he, in whom he trusteth, will be his *sure Deliverer*. Under all the doubts, and waverings of his faith, to which a weak corrupted nature is exposed, the principles of his holy profession remind him continually, of the *ascension* of his Redeemer into Heaven. Thou, O blessed Jesus, dost he secretly exclaim, (under every misgiving of the human heart) *Thou art ascended up on high!* When we are apt to faint at the alarming review of our manifold infirmities, and great unworthiness; these words remind us to consider well, the *Parson* who is *gone* before, to prepare a place for all who love him;

him; that it is no less, than *He who left the glories of Heaven, and descended first into the lower parts of the earth*, who is again ascended from the grave, to set on the right hand of the Majesty on high; from whence he came, merely for the gracious purpose of performing such a work of mercy, as should have virtue to *draw all men unto him*. Thither is he gone, that he might fulfil all things *that are spoken of him*, by the Prophets, and in the *Psalms*; to cheer our drooping spirits, and warm our souls with this assurance, *that to Him is given all power in Heaven and Earth*. Let us not *despond*, then, my brethren; let not the most cruel or artful terrors of the foe dismay us; however dark the night of our mind, may sometimes prove; in this wilderness of trial, which when permitted, may truly be termed *a darkness that may be felt*; that is, whenever we seem to fail of Divine support; when we even so far fall from grace, as to have no better comfort, than the perishing satisfaction that the creature can afford us, (and upon which, whoever leans, they will truly find it a *brittle reed*); even *then*, let us reflect, *that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, that He is ascended*, and thus, though sorrow may endure for a night, though we may be allowed to wander hopeless, and helpless for a season, yet let us console ourselves, that this may be designed in mercy, to wean us from all dependance upon *ourselves*, or any earthly power, and to lead us to look up to HIM, who alone hath the gift of life: thus joy will return again, as in the morning of refreshment from the dreary visions of the night;
when

when we stedfastly look up, and build alone upon our Savior's love and power united.

It is true, our bitter and spiritual enemy, is ever ready to scare, and hinder us from dwelling on so rich a prospect. He is busy in representing to many, *that they shall not die eternally*, although they live regardless of the conditions of their peace, (viz. the trials of the spirit working by love); or when they are far advanced in his destructive snares, and begin most justly to fear the consequence, he would then persuade them they are made for nought but this life,—that they shall perish like the beasts, and thereby beguiles them to *continue* in gratifying the desires of sin for a season, while they have the power of indulging their ruinous appetites. And indeed, when we seriously contemplate our own wretchedness, and total insufficiency of ourselves, for any thing that is good, we can hardly dare to think of sharing *heavenly bliss*. We can but conclude, that we have already received far more than we *deserve*, so grossly have we all abused the talents and blessings bestowed upon us. Yet He who knoweth whereof we are made, who remembereth that we are but dust, in tender pity, considereth our forlorn condition, and when we are almost ready to fall a victim to the treachery and power of the tempter, working on our conscious apprehensions, he then suggests this SECOND powerful encouragement to lift up our heads, and hearts, contained in these reviving words: HE HAS LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, that is, he has subdued him, who was wont to lead weak, sinful mortals, *captive*
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at his will. *Then*, hath Christ made captives, who were the authors of the most deplorable captivity; even the slavery of sin, and the wages of it, which is *death*. *HERB* then, is the trembling sinner's hope, a hope full of consolation to the weakest, and most heavy laden, *That the conqueror is conquered, that the strong one is bound*, "that human nature is
 "redeemed from the grave, and that Christ has
 "triumphantly carried it (by his ascension) with
 "him to the throne of God;" there is He become our great High Priest, and as he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, therefore doth he compassionate our sorrows and trials, and continually maketh intercession for us; and if we fail not to call upon his name, to implore him to help our unbelief, and to strengthen our trust in him, *then seeing this same blessed Jesus is passed into the Heaven, and that no less than the Son of God himself is now our advocate and mediator, we may boldly come unto the throne of grace, and expect to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* These, my brethren, are the words of truth, the inspired language of one converted from a persecutor of the Blessed Jesus, to be an especial apostle of Christ's church among the Gentiles; and the assurance of their validity becomes still stronger, from this consideration; that thirdly; CHRIST HAS RECEIVED GIFTS FOR MEN. The Christian, therefore, has no longer any just cause to fear; since however powerful the united assaults of the *Devil*, the *World*, and the *Flesh*, the friend of mankind is in possession of
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of the never failing means of their deliverance; *He hath received gifts for men.* From the moment that he paid the ransom on the cross, and that these healing words escaped him, IT IS FINISHED; the power of universal redemption was consigned to him as his *right*. What the Lamb of God effected by his being slain from the beginning of the world, according to God's different dispensations or dealings with his creatures, before the Christ's *actual* appearance upon earth, was *now* visibly displayed, in a far more glorious manner by the light of the Gospel, and the establishment of the Christian faith throughout all the earth. *Old things were done away*; the shadow of things to come was necessarily superseded, by the substance of the things themselves, what man of himself could not do through the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh that nevertheless the law being good, the righteousness of it might be fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. This then was the essential gift that Christ received at the hands of his Father for us, the gift of the *spirit*; not only those preter-natural powers which constitute the *outward* miracles, and which relate (as before observed) to the works of the Holy Ghost on Whitsunday: but the *inward* gift of *grace*, or divine help, that spiritual assistance so needful to every Christian, to render him meet to be partaker of the inheritance of light.

And that people should not be carried away with any enthusiastic, or dangerous notions of God's manner of dealing with his creatures, in conse-

quence of the efficacious intercession of their Mediator, he assures us further, by his Apostle, that even this indispensable gift of the renewal of their minds, was conveyed through the natural operation or instrument of *other* gifts, which may be properly termed the *means* of grace. For we read in the chapter which so immediately relates to the subject of my Text in general, Eph. iv. 11, 12. That one happy consequence of Christ's ascension was, *that he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers,* and that to this very end, *to the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ,* that is, the Church: and these we find to be gifts so essentially necessary, that they were given to men to be employed by them as what would advance them *in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, and render them perfect even to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:* and by the way, my brethren, we may infer an argument from this doctrine, of the *necessity and benefit*, of men being *content* with the particular religious blessings dispensed to them, in the churches or societies in which they have been born, and educated. To employ their respective gifts and talents *faithfully*, in the peculiar work of the ministry to which they are called by the Providence of God, without opposing, depreciating, or interfering with the positive office or engagements of other men, which might tend to stir up strife, jealousy, and contention, instead of preserving the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;*

peace; the end for which the manifold graces of God are distributed to his servants.

These then being the gifts which Christ has obtained for us, and which we must confess are visibly continued to us (unworthy as we are) even to this day; the most ignorant among you, my brethren, must be sensible how highly it behoves us, not to despise these gifts, but to make all the use of them in our power, as likewise how hard it will be for such to escape, and how very heavy the condemnation will fall on all who *neglect so great salvation as first spoken by the Lord*, and now confirmed by his *Ascension*.

If the benefits which men in general have received, in consequence of the Redeemer's glorified state, must be acknowledged truly valuable, how considerably are the power and goodness of the Lord exalted by the following expressions in the text, that **FOURTHLY**; *He hath obtained favor even FOR HIS ENEMIES*. To this blessed declaration many parts of Scripture witness. It is a doctrine of most powerful support, maintained by St. Paul in most of his Epistles, *that when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly, and hereby God commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 8. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance* (says he again) 1 Tim. i. 3. *that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*; and he adds, with the true spirit of christian humility, self abasement, and conviction of the undeserved mercy he had obtained, *of whom I am the chief*. Again he proceeds to argue upon it in the 10th

verse, and to infer this satisfactory hope, *that if when we were sinners we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*; that is, if the sacrifice was accepted as a sufficient atonement for the remission of sins, doubtless we shall be assisted through the power of his Resurrection, and Ascension, by the regenerating spirit of his *grace*.

That the whole world was in a state of enmity with God, is a truth that cannot be disputed, because (the Jews excepted) all nations were defiled with the most gross idolatry, and lived in the indulgence of all impurities. *Their minds were alienated from God, in that they held the truth in unrighteousness*, and though God had afforded abundant proof of his eternal power and godhead by the things that are made, yet as thereby they might have known God, and yet glorified him not as God, *neither were thankful*, but became vain in their own imagination, and *their foolish heart was darkened*, so God left them to themselves; and the natural consequence was, *that they changed the truth into a lie, worshipping the creature instead of the Creator*, became devoted to all uncleanness and unnatural lusts, and *even sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils*.

But even while men were such enemies to their Creator, *who is God blessed for evermore*; He vouchsafed them gifts, through virtue of the Mediator's triumph, RECONCILIATION, PARDON, and the means of *conversion*, and serving him in righteousness and true holiness. For in Asia, Greece, Rome, and

and the most distant parts of the earth, where Satan had set up his kingdom with great power, and lying wonders, he spread abroad the invincible persuasion of the blessed Gospel, drawing to the faith of his eternal Son all such as were disposed to be saved, sending them Apostles, Teachers, and every spiritual instrument necessary to pull down the strong holds of Belial.

So far then, it is very clear, that Christ received gifts for his enemies, in a very extensive, and important sense; but as the translation of this member of the text is delivered in our Bibles, the love and condescension of our Blessed Lord receives *additional force and consequence*, for it is there expressed, *yea for the REBELLIOUS also*. Now it is a manifest aggravation to add *rebellion* to the character of an enemy, for this supposes the person guilty of *ingratitude*, (the foulest of all the stains in our degenerate nature), for rebellion argues an opposition to some lawful authority, to which we had once *consented*, and by which we have been *protected*. This is a distinction, therefore, that brings the application much closer to our *own case*, and which it may profit us all very much most seriously, and humbly to attend to.

Sinners, under the *christian* dispensation, may fairly be termed *rebels*, in the HIGHEST DEGREE, and this is the miserable case, my brethren, with the very *best* of us. That rebellion is the filling up the measure of iniquity, is plain from the expressive meaning of the word in Hebrew, which is the same with BITTERNESS; and throughout all the

sacred volume we shall find it a thing most hateful to the Lord, and continually provoking him to punish. We must confess then, that there is a very essential difference between those who are *enemies* to God through the depravity of human nature singly, that is the effect of *original sin*, and those who transgress the clear light, and positive precepts of the Gospel, who in a manner *trample under foot the Son of God, and put their Savior to an open shame*. For the *latter*, revolt from an obligation, that is, as it were, written in the *heart*, and placed before their eyes; *these*, are the rebellious in a *woeful sense indeed*, and how must conscience rise against us all, and rank us in the ungrateful list! Grievous as is the truth, alarming as the reflexion must be, to every thoughtful person, yet have we deep cause for humiliation on this account; and but for the joy that revisits us, whenever we consider the precious promises obtained for us in consequence of Christ's *Ascension*, we should inevitably sink under the weight of our infirmities: But for our comfort, it is declared that he hath *received gifts for the rebellious* ALSO, that is, even for the *worst of sinners*! O how should this exalt our praise, and spur us to obedience.

But in the very interesting application of this part of the text, it seems highly necessary we should now inquire what PECULIAR GIFTS, our Blessed Master has received for such a base description of his enemies. All the other gifts and means of grace are evidently abused, despised, and trampled upon by the REBELLIOUS. What wondrous remedy
can

can Heaven have in store for them who have even *done despite to the spirit of grace*. Happy for us, the treasures of God's mercy are inexhaustible, and the infinite merit of the Redeemer hath purchased a sovereign cure for the most inveterate disease. He holds out *hope* in the most malignant case, he proffers *repentance* to his most bitter foes; to those in the most dangerous state; **THIS**, is the gift, the *invaluable* gift he hath reserved for men, even for the *rebellious*. This is the grand restorative of a proud, polluted, disobedient heart. **HIM** hath God exalted to give *repentance to his people*, repentance unto life, and faith in his most Holy Name. Let the sinner hear, and be confounded, and blush at his rebellious *madness*. Let him rejoice, and exult at the same time, at such *refreshing mercy*. Let him pray for such a godly sorrow as worketh repentance unto salvation. Let him believe in the Son of God, who came down from heaven *to call sinners to repentance*, and is ascended up again, to send down the renewing gift to all who feel its want, who *ask* for, and *employ* it. On all who shew forth works meet for *repentance*, through *faith towards God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*. While it is day, let us hearken to his voice, my brethren; let us not harden our hearts any longer by the deceitfulness of sin; let us make a stand in time, lest the day of grace be shortened; *let the time past of our life suffice us to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings and all abominable wickedness*. Let us no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. Let us

pray continually for strength to keep these holy resolutions, and ~~then~~ we may well assure ourselves, that as he who hath promised, is faithful and cannot lie; so shall we experience the aid that is implied in the *55th* and last sentence of the text; viz. that if we turn unto the Lord our God with all our heart, and mind, and strength, he will most assuredly come, **AND DWELL AMONG US**, that is, he will give us a sufficient measure of his grace to resist the power and malice of the tempter.

I have purposely enlarged upon this subject from the serious consequence, and great necessity of our faith therein to our **EVERLASTING PEACE**, and I shall now conclude, in the words of the before-mentioned truly christian Prelate, as being explanatory of the latter portion of the text; “Christ
“ being thus ascended into glory (says he) has re-
“ ceived of the Father the promise of the spirit
“ with all his gifts and graces, to bestow upon the
“ sons of men; even upon such as heretofore
“ have not only broken his laws, but appeared in
“ arms against him: yet of such as these, con-
“ verted by the power of the Gospel, has he found
“ and established a church, *that the Lord God might*
“ *dwell among them.*” Not only an outward vi-
sible church, professing christianity, in various
quarters of the globe, at different periods, as his
infinite wisdom shall see proper for his glory, and
according to the influence of his grace upon the
followers of his Son’s true doctrine, and the found-
ers of such church: but he hath gathered of
his faithful servants from all parts of the world,
that

that they may form an *universal church*, and that even *individuals may be built up a lively temple, an habitation of God thro' the spirit.*

Having thus enumerated the various benefits procured for us in the glorious triumph of this happy day; having applied the valuable blessings to *ourselves*, even to those almost ready to despair of any hope, or help, how can I dismiss you, my brethren, with greater propriety, than in the language of the two following verses of the Psalm from whence this cheering text is borrowed. *Praised be the Lord God daily, even the God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us: He is our God, even the God of whom cometh salvation. God is the Lord, by whom alone we escape Death. To Him, Father Son and Holy Ghost, be all the glory for ever and ever, Amen.*

SERMON XI.

FOR WHITSUNDAY.

The same Text.

IN my discourse last Sunday, I made an application of these joyful words, not only to the general case of all among whom the Gospel should be preached, but likewise to the *peculiar* circumstances of *private* persons, and especially of such, as might be justly termed *enemies*, or rebellious servants to their Heavenly Father. I confined my observations upon Christ's ascension, to the *ordinary* graces of the Spirit, thereby obtained for us. I shall now consider this passage as it relates to the *extraordinary* gifts of the Holy Ghost, to the mighty *signs and wonders* conferred upon the Apostles, and immediate followers of our Lord as on this day, which we now commemorate on that account; and as being equally declaratory of the *first*, and highly important fulfilling of the promise which Christ made to his Disciples when on earth, and a short time before he ascended to the glories of his eternal inheritance; to the presence of the Father, at whose right hand he will sit for evermore, and from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead,

dead, and reward or punish men according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

In the 1st Ch. of the Acts, ver. 4, 5, we observe Christ is preparing his Apostles both for beholding his ascension, and the receiving the first miraculous proof of his warfare being accomplished, and his work accepted. *For being assembled together with them, he commands them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.* Now the baptism of John was really a sign of this baptism mentioned by Christ: for water, as St. Peter styles it, is a *like figure*. Not that it had any virtue then, merely as such a sign, more than it has now, as it was only the putting, or washing away the filth of the flesh: but as it is through faith the answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him.

Further, our Lord also acquaints his Apostles with the wonderful effect of this baptism, and the necessity of it, for their qualification for the work of the ministry; for he adds, in the 8th verse, *After the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ye shall receive power to render you sufficient witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.* It is observable, that before his passion, indeed, Christ kept them whom the Father had given him, by the influence of his
divine

divine example, presence, and instruction. *He test not any of them, but the son of perdition.* But yet the time was not come for the Apostles to be witnesses: So far from it, that one *denied* him, and all *forsook* him: the cause, of which I shall declare more fully in its proper place. In truth, our Blessed Lord *had not finished the work which his Father gave him to do*, 'till he had sealed it by his *death*, and proved it by his *resurrection*. And now, that he had *completed his ministry*; that he had fulfilled the priestly office for us on earth, and accomplished all the prophecies concerning him; it was necessary he should *ascend* as one all powerful *Mediator* and *King*, and receive those gifts for men, which should enable them to declare and uphold the truth with power, and also lay a sure foundation of faith and hope for all that should come after them.

This, then, being the true state of the case, the *Holy Ghost could not be given* (in that high degree in which we see he acted upon human nature in the astonishing miracles of this day) 'till *Christ was glorified*, and received power to send him from above. And of the necessity of this *last* miraculous favour, no less than the virtue of it, we have abundant proof from the dulness, and want of active faith in the Apostles, both *before* Christ suffered, no less than after his *resurrection*. For we read in St. John, that they understood not the things that their Master said, or did, *before that he was glorified*; but when that great event took place, they immediately remembered that these things were written of him, and that they had done those things unto him. And even

even after he was risen, they wanted a sufficient degree of grace to *comprehend what the Prophets had spoken*. They were taxed by him *as fools, and slow of heart*, as to their *belief* of these essential circumstances to befall him. And therefore to help their understanding *he began at Moses and all the Prophets, and he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*.

In the event of *this* day, then, my brethren, we have positive confirmation of the truth of all our Blessed Savior said, or did on earth, and also what he has promised us.

I shall now proceed (according to my usual custom at these stated seasons of the year) to give you such a *history* of the day, as may be proper to inform and instruct any who are ignorant of some particulars that immediately relate to it. And first, as to the *titles* given to it, in Acts ii. 1; (wherein the exact history of this event is fully recorded,) we find that it took place *when the day of Pentecost was fully come*. Now the time of *Pentecost*, was one of the most eminent feasts among the Jews. It was held in memorial of the law being delivered to them, on Mount Sinai. The original word signifies *fifty*, and this feast was always kept exactly that number of days from the Jewish Passover. “ It is likewise kept by all Christians, as a feast
“ of no less note, on account of the Holy Ghost
“ descending that very same day on the Apostles,
“ and other Christians, in the visible appearance
“ of fiery tongues, and in memorial of those mira-
“ culous powers that were then conferred upon
“ them.”

“ them.” And it is kept by us likewise, at the same distance of time from Easter, as the Jewish Pentecost was to their Passover.

As to its present title of *Whit*, or White Sunday, there are various accounts respecting it. One of the most plain, and plausible, is this. It might partly take this name from a just notion of the extraordinary degree of light, and knowledge, which was then *figuratively* shed abroad among the Apostles, in order to the enlightening the world; and partly, perhaps, from the ceremonies used by those who were newly baptized at this season. For you must be told, that among the ancients, excepting in cases of *necessity*, they administered Baptism at no other times but those of Easter, and Whitsuntide. They baptized at Easter, in memory of Christ's death and resurrection, (agreeable to which we have the two parts of the Christian life represented to us in Baptism, viz. dying unto sin, and rising again-unto newness of life.) And they baptized at Whitsuntide, in remembrance of the Apostles being then *baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*, and of their having at that time baptized in their own persons near three thousand souls.

At this season particularly, it was a custom, and part of their rejoicing, during the following week, to congratulate the entrance of a new body of Christians into the Church, and they that were lately baptized, came each day to church in *white garments*, with *lights* before them. This was meant to signify that they had now laid aside the works of *darkness*, and were desirous to become the children of
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of *light*, by the resolution of leading a new, innocent, and unspotted life. These white robes which were then wore by them, were laid up carefully in the church, that they might be produced as witnesses against them, if they should afterwards deny the faith, which they had professed in *Baptism*. In those times, many were daily converted from heathenism, and that accounts for their being baptized at years of *maturity*. For these persons, prayers and thanksgivings were made at this particular season, and instruction given them on the principles and ways of Christianity. But in later times, when Christ's religion was become more general, and most of those baptized were *infants*, and so not capable of such outward ceremonies, the custom then was changed, and baptism administered at *all* times of the year, alike, as at the beginning of Christianity.

Thus much may be sufficient for your information, my brethren, respecting the different *titles of the day*. We will now return to a more close consideration of the *nature* and *necessity* of the extraordinary gifts and power of the Holy Spirit that were poured out upon the first Apostles and Disciples of Christ.

First, then, it is very obvious, that the Apostles being men of no influence or authority; nay, most of them wanting the advantages of other men, and beset on all sides by inveterate enemies, who having, (as they thought,) destroyed their *Leader*, would be soon too powerful for any exertion of their warmest zeal, it became indisputably necessary, when their

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Master was taken from them, that they should be invested with some irresistible, *outward* credentials, to *qualify* their *commission*, and encourage them in the faithful prosecution of the work assigned them.

Learning, they had little, or none, yet they were to go and teach, and baptize all nations, and disciple them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Now this was a description of the *Deity*, to which the Pagan world had been an entire *stranger*. . . As to their *former* consequence among their *own* countrymen, *that* was established by the *presence* of their *Lord and Master*; but he had left the world; the favor, support, and countenance of the *people*, would naturally be diminished, since they no longer experienced the *miracles*, and benefits that helped to gain them over to the cause, and strengthened their *belief*. And as to connexions of any weight, that might *recover* their esteem, and vindicate their party, they were entirely destitute of any, being in general low, and needy as to *birth*, and *station*. Doubtless, therefore, the religion must speedily have come to nothing, had not its Divine Author so singularly exerted himself in its defence. By *miracles* it was at *first* announced; by miracles alone, it could at *first* be *propagated*. This the whole history of the Apostles abundantly confirms; and it is one great article of our faith, that so it *must* have been. But here *another* exercise of this leading Christian principle is afforded us, viz. though the miraculous testimony of Christ's religion being from *God*, is a primary article of our belief, yet, *it is* as essential to a sound faith, to be

convinced that *miracles* were as *necessary* to *cease*, when the peculiar work they were calculated to promote, was *fully established*, as that they ever existed; for otherwise, we shall open a wide field for enthusiastic, and credulous errors. *It was expedient*, we are told, by Christ himself, John xvi. 7, &c. *that He should go away*, for more reasons than the extraordinary operations of the Spirit; *for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you*. By this, we plainly see, that *the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost*, had another important office towards the Christian life, besides the enabling men to perform *outward miracles*. *He was to teach them all things needful for Christian edification; He was to bring all things to their remembrance; that is, to enlighten the mind, to understand, and love the truths that Christ has spoken, and accordingly our Lord calls him the Spirit of truth, who was to guide men into all truth.*

When we celebrate this season, therefore, we are not to *confine* our gratitude to the extolling God's holy name for the mighty signs and wonders conferred on our Savior's *first* disciples; and for the miraculous light which shone so eminently upon the church in its *infant* state, but we must *equally* praise him, for the no less essential benefits of the Spirit, in the promise of his ordinary blessings, to future ages. We must pray that our faith may be quickened to acknowledge, and experience, the sanctifying effects of his ordinary, and essential influence on the human mind, to be convinced of his actual presence with us, by the *other* signs of his
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being come, which our Lord as positively describes, and promises, as he did the *visible descent* and inspiration of the Spirit on the Apostles, before they left Jerusalem. These are the *marks* he instances of his inward operations, John xvi. 8, &c. *He will reprove*, that is, convince *the world of sin*. (1.) He will shew men the depravity of their own hearts, in an unregenerate state, and their insufficiency to please God, without the help of divine grace. (2.) As to *righteousness*. He will convince them, that all holiness cometh of God, whether we consider it in *cause*, or *effect*, and that we have no ability to please Him but what is derived from the good influence of the Holy Spirit. (3.) He will shew the certainty of *judgment*, because punishment is denounced against all wilful wickedness, and impenitence. *These are gifts* which Christ hath obtained for us, through the unction of the Holy Spirit, which are as *necessary*, and *powerful*, in *leading us into all truth*, as was his immediate effect upon the faculties of the Apostles, to enable them to *speak with tongues as He gave them utterance*. This is as strong a proof, throughout the whole Christian world, of our Savior's victory, mercy, and truth, (and which will increase to all eternity) as that the miracles wrought by the Apostles, was *the mighty power of God*. There is as much value in these ordinary gifts of the Spirit, to forward our salvation, as there was in His *extraordinary* acts, to convert and establish the heathen world. The only difference is this, the former milder influences draw us upon the conditions of the new covenant of God, in Christ; the latter, were an immediate, positive testimony of

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His absolute government of all nature, exhibited to *ground* and *confirm* mankind in the belief of every other promise. Of this truth, Christ's own words in John xvi. 9. supply abundant proof. The Holy Spirit, he says, *will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me.* Here the express condition, or necessity of the grace of faith in Christ, is clearly mentioned. After all the miracles He wrought himself, and which, by his Spirit, his disciples repeated after him, our Lord concludes it *SIN* in all who do not yet believe in him; this, then, is *one* important truth, of which all real Christians are convinced by the Comforter; viz. that it is sin *not* to believe in Christ; and if our everlasting happiness *depends* upon this *faith*, surely no gift whatever, deserves a higher character, than that which *teaches* us this faith; since the Apostle St. Paul asserteth positively, *that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor. xii. 3. Faith then, though called a *condition*, is an actual *gift* of God, and it becometh us most earnestly to pray for the *possession* of it, and humbly to rejoice when we have received it, *since we are insufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

That we are under a *conditional* covenant (that is, that we must possess these gifts and graces of the Gospel) we have another remarkable assurance, in the words of St. Peter ii. Acts xxviii. 29. when that Apostle possessed that *fulness of faith* which enabled him to *speak boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus*, it is observable that he proceeds directly to the only foundation that can be laid, *Let all the house*

of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Upon this we read, that when they heard this *they were pricked in their heart*; that is, their consciences were smitten. Doubtless the milder influence of the Spirit was beginning to work upon them; the Comforter was *drawing* them, by this outward means of the Apostle's preaching; and this prophecy of Zechariah was then fulfilling on this people; *I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit* OF GRACE AND SUPPLICATION. Zech. xii. 10. I say, this prophecy was then *literally* accomplished, for the people immediately said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* St. Peter then declares to them the positive *condition* or *sign* of their regeneration, and admission into favor; he answers, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.* He exhorts them to apply to the *cause* of every good gift to bestow this grace upon them; and in order to encourage, and further their conversion, he holds out to them the blessed *consequence* of their compliance, *Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you and unto your children, and to ALL that are afar off, even as many as the Lord God shall call*; that is, as in his wisdom he shall please to bring into the Christian fold. Here, we have an indisputable evidence, both that the spirit of regeneration *may* be conveyed through the outward means of *Baptism*, that *obedience* to that holy sacrament is *one* condition of our obtaining it, and depends so far on ourselves, and also that such *other*

gifts of the Holy Ghost were then conferred on these converts as were essentially necessary to salvation, and which are equally promised to the end of time, to all who will repent, and believe the Gospel; in other words, who will humbly and sincerely use the appointed means of obtaining every Christian grace. What I am desirous to point out to you in this discourse, is the *difference* between the *miraculous*, and the *ordinary* gifts of the Spirit. *Of the three thousand that were baptized, and added to the church that day*, we do not find that they were endowed with power of *working miracles*. *The many signs and wonders that brought such fear upon them, were done only by the APOSTLES*; all that is said, or seems to be required of the *people*, (in short, the effect of the Spirit of Grace in *their* mind) was, *that they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, and fellowship*, (that is, believing in Christ, and holding in unity together,) *breaking of bread, and in prayers*, receiving the holy communion, and imploring increase of grace.

In the account of this first grand testimony of the truth of Christ's promise, it may be profitable more minutely to consider the peculiar motion, or *degree of gift*, which the people testified upon the exhortation of Christ's servant. The expression is singular, and strong, *they were touched in their hearts*; their *conscience* smote them; that candle of the Lord in the breast of all men, shone brighter through the new light administered by the Apostle's language, and reflected their inward baseness, and foul misconduct. And thus must it be with you, my friends,

Friends, as many of you as are not deeply sensible of the weight of duties that lie upon you, in your Christian warfare. You must *be pricked at heart*, with a sense of your manifold neglects, transgressions, and great unworthiness, before you will be inclined to make any valuable advancement towards salvation. You must see the *danger*, and feel the natural *fear* attending it, before you can say *sincerely*, as these convicted sinners did, *Men and brethren what shall we do?* And yet, for your comfort, you have the very *same* grace promised, and means afforded you, that they had; viz. *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and the administration of the *Word* and *Sacraments*; here are the same increase of gifts still promised to you as to *them*, upon your obeying the same *conditions*. Repent, (that is, beg assistance to be renewed in the spirit of your mind) be *baptized*, *partake of the Lord's supper*, and pray constantly for grace. To all who are disposed to *turn to the Lord*, and forsake their evil ways, to them St. Peter speaks as plainly and as effectually, in the *written word*, as he did to the Jews by his *living voice*. Nay, it is an *additional* gift of the good Spirit of God that we have these words of life recorded for our support, and information; and we may rest assured, that the *doctrines* of Christ are *now* sufficient to accomplish the work of the Spirit in the hearts of all that believe, otherwise a *continuation* of miracles would doubtless have been permitted. We are therefore no longer to look for any miraculous, or instantaneous effect in consequence of a preternatural power delegated to particular persons, and which they can

convey to others. These extraordinary gifts, it has been fully shewn, were granted in the *beginning*, to magnify Christ's power, to confirm the *authority* of the Apostles, and to plant the Gospel so effectually, that the utmost malice of the enemy should not prevail to root it up. As Ministers of the Gospel, we are only *stewards* of the mysteries of God; all that depends on us, *is to be found faithful in declaring the whole counsel of God*, and to *live*, so as not to *shame our office*; to exhort you, *to covet earnestly the best gifts*, and to pray for you, that you may find grace to help in time of need; all the rest lays between God and your own souls. If you rely wholly on the Spirit of Christ to relieve your burthen, you may safely trust that he will give you rest; but you must be cautious not to employ the means of grace as mere *form*, without endeavoring to fulfil what they enjoin you to *do*. On the other hand, you can never expect any share of the gifts of the Spirit, if you entirely *neglect* the *means*. He must be a weak brother indeed, who supposes God's spirit will abide with those who forsake his *house*, and *table*; who continually despise his *word*, and holy *ordinances*. This is an admonition that leads me naturally, at this time, to offer a few words upon that *particular* means of grace, which pious custom, and humble trust in our Redeemer, engages us to employ in order to obtain fresh help, and to strengthen our hope of everlasting life. It has already been observed, that among the different gifts of the Spirit that discovered themselves upon the conversion of that happy number recorded in the Acts of
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the Apostles, the necessity of *constant prayer*, and frequently *partaking of the holy communion*, seems to have made the first forcible impression. It is certain, that the oftener they remembered what that glorious Savior had *done* for them, whom they had so cruelly persecuted and slain, the more their *love* and *duty* must have been *enlarged*, and that upon the principle of Christ's *own* observation, of the grateful penitent, *To whom much is forgiven, they love much*; and great, past all description, is the love of God towards men. It needs but very little thought to be assured, that if the world had not been involved in most serious *danger*, the Son of God would never have left the glories of his Father, and suffered so much to *save* it. And we may be equally certain, that He who was the fulness of all wisdom, and goodness, would never have appointed any service for his followers, but what he knew would help to *strengthen* their weak nature, and *forward their salvation*. He declares most solemnly himself, that unless his disciples *eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man* (in a *spiritual* sense,) *they can have no life in them*, and that *the words which he spake were spirit, and life*. How can any profess a *true belief* in Christ, and at the same time deprive themselves of this blessed communion with him? Justly, does our Lord lament the carelessness and perverseness of the multitude, in these affectionate words: *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life. The breaking of bread together*, or receiving the Lord's supper, is *one* solemn method of *coming unto him*. In this, we commemorate his sacrifice
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upon the cross. It is designed to bring to our remembrance his death and passion, which naturally awaken in us a deep abhorrence of our former *sinful courses*, fresh resolutions of *amendment*, and pious desires to be *assisted*. When our thoughts are suitably engaged in this holy work, our hearts must warm with gratitude towards the gracious Author of our recovery; and breathe nothing but fervent prayer, and praise. If then this solemn act of worship is designed to improve us in all true goodness, what possible excuse can be alledged for those, who wilfully neglect it, who continually turn their backs upon it, as if it were a useless part of public service; especially when we view it as a *positive command* of Christ, which cannot be disobeyed without the guilt of most presumptuous sin. They, indeed, who through a pure sense of their own unworthiness, are *ever* scrupulous and fearful of communicating, are rather to be *pitied* than reproached; but then let all consider, and beware, lest *that* unworthiness proceeds from wilful *continuance in sin* of any kind, or from a *wicked* fear that obedience in this respect will hinder them from following many favorite, and hurtful pleasures: woeful is the case of *such*! But where the fear proceeds from a mistaken notion of the ordinance itself; from a thorough knowledge of the weakness and depravity of human nature; how little they deserve from God, and a truly religious dread of *offending* him; such persons will do well to consider, that by staying away, they debar themselves of the most likely means to confirm them in a better *obedience*, and to
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forward them in all true holiness, and that there is no objection can be pleaded from *such* unworthiness, but will equally hinder them of every benefit from any other part of religious worship. And lastly, whoever continues to neglect this duty from *ignorance* of the nature and end of the appointment, it must be wholly their *own fault* by not being disposed to *ask*, and receive *instruction*. Would to God, that all who have been hitherto deficient in this article, were sorely *pricked at heart*, for their former inconsiderate conduct; that they had grace to come unto me, their regular Minister, with this important question, WHAT SHALL WE DO? I humbly trust in God, nothing should be wanting on *my* part to inform them. Nay, I have frequently told you, my brethren, that I do not consider myself placed here merely to *preach* to you, but that I am at *all times ready* to give you spiritual advice, and consolation, as your own leisure suits, and necessities require. In this consists the *value* of a resident ministry; would to God, that many of you were *duly* sensible of it, and of the abundant opportunities *now* afforded you of *knowing* your duty, and being *established* in it; then might ye happily escape the terrible condemnation that certainly will overtake you, if you persist in slighting such providential blessings, and live on in darkness and iniquity: *For now you have no cloak for your sin*. May all who at this time design to obey Christ's gracious invitation, approach with gratitude; and humility, to his table. Let us add fervent prayers to this our bounden service, that we may obtain all the benefits
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of his precious death, his glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, of all which mighty favors this holy ordinance was instituted continually to remind us. In it, we have *outward* gifts continued, and the *inward* graces promised. We have only to pray, that God would strengthen our weak faith, and quicken these graces in us, that we may see, and *feel* the great *necessity*, and wondrous mercy of our Redeemer's death. That this humble admonition, which my unfeigned regard for your eternal interest induces me to watch every opportunity of giving you, may work, through the power of God's grace upon your hearts, to determine you in *future*, to a wise, and Christian conduct in this important part of your religious vows, is my sincere and effectual prayer to God, through Jesus Christ. And may the needful influence of the Holy Spirit be so abundantly poured out on *all* our hearts, that we may daily increase in every Christian virtue, till we are properly prepared to join the Heavenly host, and celebrate the praise of Christ to all eternity. Amen, in the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom, be all the Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XII.

FOR TRINITY-SUNDAY.

I JOHN V. 7.

For there are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are ONE.

THERE is nothing relative to the holy religion we profess, of which, a Christian should be wilfully ignorant. Want of education, time, and talents, would inevitably keep numbers unacquainted with many valuable subjects of religious knowledge, but for the information they may acquire by attending the public labors of their teachers. So many stated and happy opportunities are graciously appointed by Divine Providence for this good end, that it requires only *disposition* in the hearers, to supply the deficiencies of that early instruction, which either inferior, or unfortunate circumstances of life, may have denied them.

The words of the text contain a doctrine, most highly necessary for all Christians to believe: in honor of which, the wisdom of the Church hath judged proper to appoint a particular day, and service. It is called the Festival of the *Trinity*, and
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is of very ancient usage, having been regularly observed for many ages. That your apprehension of what I have to say on this occasion, may be as complete as possible, I will begin with the *meaning* of the word. It is derived from the Latin tongue, and in its literal acceptation, is used to express the number *three*. It is a term employed in the science of school divinity, to denote the incomprehensible union of the three persons of the Godhead. The occasion of a *particular* season being appointed for the celebration of this feast, was this. As in the earliest times, the praises of the Holy Trinity were every day set forth in the doxology, the hymns, and creeds; the Church concluded it superfluous, to set apart a *stated* day, for what was punctually honored every day. But when the ARIAN heresy* against this doctrine, began to spread, when this divine mystery, which real Christians venerate as the most essential principle of their faith, was blasphemously

* Arius was a Priest of the Church of Alexandria, in the reign of the Emperor Constantine, about 300 years after Christ: a man of a subtle genius, and great eloquence of speech. The blasphemy of his heresy consists in denying the co-equality, and co-eternity of the Son with the Father; which in other words, is denying him the attributes of the Divine nature, and consequently, that we cannot worship him as God. It is remarkable, that this, and every other impious doctrine, when closely traced, will be found to originate in *envy*, and *worldly opposition*; principles of a diabolical and turbulent quality, and which cannot exist in a mind duly influenced by genuine piety; for it is well known that what incited Arius to propagate his impious opinion, was *pride* in being thought *neglected*, and because another was advanced before him, whom he held inferior to himself in merit.

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attacked, then, in opposition to such deadly mischief, and to guard as much as possible against its growth, the Church concluded it expedient, from that unhappy period, to make the subject of the Blessed Trinity a service of more *marked* respect; and though, as before observed, it was daily celebrated in the public offices of devotion, yet she now judged that it might be profitable to render it a *separate* day of solemn meditation.

As to the time of the year in which it is kept, the propriety of it is evident on *this* account; because after our Lord's ascension into Heaven, and *having* fulfilled his promise of sending the Holy Ghost to enlighten his Apostles, and promote the establishment of his Church on earth, a fuller knowledge of divine things consequently took place, than could possibly have been obtained, in equal degree, *before* this inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the Church having dedicated the preceding solemn festivals to the honor of each person separately, and thereby acknowledged the *Unity*  *Trinity*, it was now thought highly seasonable, (particularly for the reasons pre-advanced) to conclude these serious services by one additional feast in honor of the Holy Trinity *together*, which celebration we now distinguish by the *Trinity in Unity*.

Having, I hope, afforded you sufficient information as to the *history of the day*, I will just take notice of a common objection, that the opposers of the doctrine it was instituted to commemorate, have been accustomed to employ; and I shall then proceed to examine the *doctrine itself* as far as it can afford

afford an object of human enquiry, and as it is an essential article of faith in every genuine Christian.

It has been weakly observed, by some, that the *term* by which we denominate this doctrine in which we profess to believe, must necessarily be objectionable, because we cannot produce authority of Scripture for its use. Further, that it is a mere term of *art*, the invention of the school-men, and in itself conveys no valuable intelligence to the generality of hearers or readers. In reply to which trifling charge, we may with truth assert, that neither are many *other* words to be actually found in Holy Scripture, which nevertheless are perfectly scriptural in their application, and have been constantly employed, in all ages of the Christian Church, to represent the most essential doctrines of our religious faith. It would answer no good purpose to trespass upon your time, by enlarging on this head at present; one instance may serve to illustrate my remark, as well as many. For example, as the word DIVINITY, is no where to be found throughout all Scripture, it may as truly be excepted to, as this in question; and yet the learned have adopted it as a single term whereby to signify, (1.) the Supreme Being, or Deity, the Cause of causes, or God Himself. (2.) We use this *latter* word to specify our Savior's participation of the nature, and excellence of *God*, as distinguishable from his *humanity*, or *mortal nature*. And (3.) we use it as comprehending the general knowledge of divine or heavenly things. In like manner the word TRINITY, has been universally adopted by Divines and Religious Pro-

Professors, to include the union of the three Blessed Persons of the Godhead. The *doctrine*, however, which is implied in the expression, can never materially suffer, even though the term itself was proved exceptionable, but as it has been warranted by the authority of *time*, and the usage of the most judicious, and christian writers, it has every claim to propriety that can be desired; being strictly grounded in the analogy of language, or the likeness of things by means of suitable signs: in other words, it is that sign in language, whereby we comprehend, in a single word, the mysterious concord of the Godhead or Divine Nature. And there would be equally as sufficient reason to object to the undivided nature of God, because men have been accustomed to express this description of the SUPREME, by the word UNITY of the Godhead, as to deny the several *offices* of his nature, because we signify this article of belief, by calling it the TRINITY.

But the truth and importance of the *doctrine*, is what principally concerns us; the other is an unprofitable contest about *words*. Concerning this, then, three points are necessary to be considered, and established. (1.) Whether the doctrine is clearly laid down in scripture. (2.) Whether we are bound to *believe* what we do not entirely *comprehend*. And (3.) Whether because a thing is *above* our reason (or present mental powers of understanding) it is therefore to be deemed *inconsistent* with reason, and not a proper object of *religious faith*.

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faith. To each of these points I will speak plainly, and as briefly as possible.

The whole of this doctrine is particularly related, and guarded in the Creed appointed for the service of this day, which bears the name of **ATHANASIUS**. And as the contents of this celebrated Formule, so nearly concerns the present subject, it may be proper to give you a short account of it. I am aware, it has been fashionable at different periods, and to this day, among the merely *nominal*, *scrupulous*, or ill-grounded numbers of Christians, to raise objections against this Creed, and (as is commonly the case) by way of vilifying the *doctrine*, to asperse the *author*. But when it is on one hand properly considered, that this Creed was written to oppose the most blasphemous and antichristian tenets that ever were disseminated, and to inform and confirm Christians in the circumstantial knowledge of their *purest faith*: and on the other hand, when it is charitably weighed, that the Author of it was traduced for no other cause but for his exemplary constancy in standing out against a host of bitter enemies, who had impiously and boldly denied *the Divinity of the Son of God*: the judgment of all serious and candid persons, must take a different turn from that of hasty, and mis-grounded censure. Of the truths contained in the Creed itself, more will be said when we come to take a view of the support they have in Scripture. Of the *Person*, to whom the composition of it is ascribed, it may be necessary to observe thus far. One of the highest authority
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for piety and learning *, affords us this short, but satisfactory account of him, " From the time of
 " his consecration to be Arch Bishop, during the
 " long and trying space of six and forty years, and
 " to the latest hour of his life in this world, they
 " never suffered him to enjoy the comfort of a
 " peaceful day. Under four successive Emperors,
 " he suffered the most grievous persecution for his
 " faithful, and intrepid conduct. Nay, unable to
 " disprove the perspicuity and power of his rea-
 " soning, they had recourse to calumny of his pri-
 " vate character. Crimes were laid to his charge,
 " which in quality, and number, were enough, if
 " true, to have rendered him odious in the sight
 " of all men to the end of time. And though his
 " *Judges* were always in the number of his *accusers*,
 " yet the positive testimony of their utmost viru-
 " lence, proved nothing but disgrace to *them*, and
 " triumph to *himself*." It was not probable in-
 deed, that such a strenuous champion for the ho-
 nour of God, and the eternal nature of his beloved
 Son, as Athanasius was, should be addicted to the
 most abominable vices that can mark the character
 of a reprobate: but it is far more likely, that they
 who could be so easily prevailed upon to cast off
 the true catholic faith, should yield to the malevo-
 lent practice of detraction, against one especially,
 who singly reproached their *foul apostacy*, and ex-
 posed the subtle delusions of their false, and im-
 pious tenets.

The creed of Athanasius then, holds out no more

* The judicious and venerable Hooker, Book 5. 244.

to us, than does the word of God. It only brings into *one point of view*, what is dispersed in *several parts* of the Holy volume. It places the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity in such a light, as may afford a competent, and open profession in the Church, of our solemn belief of Christ's Divinity; in opposition to the most detestable and fatal of all heresies whatever. In other words, it declares our belief that there is *one God* in three distinct Persons, viz. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and for this we have express authority of Holy Scripture, which speaking of these three, does always distinguish them by separate characters, or offices. But it is time to advance the *proofs*.

Copious are the testimonies of Scripture, to this point. Among their numbers, the following, so easy to be remembered by you all, will now suffice. In the form of administering the Sacrament of Baptism, St. Matthew thus distinguishes the several persons in the Trinity, ch. xxviii. ver. 19. as specified by Christ's own words: *Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.* And that solemn blessing with which St. Paul concludes his second Epistle to the Cor. ch. xiii. ver. 14. supplies another powerful testimony of the same *distinction*. *The Grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and the LOVE OF GOD, and the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST,* must be allowed most pointedly to mark the *different* titles which describe these Persons; and further, the three witnesses in Heaven, so plainly mentioned in my text, viz. the Father, the Word,

Word, and the Spirit, do wonderfully confirm the certainty of the doctrine.

It now remains, that we should also shew from Scripture, that each Holy Person so described, is TRULY GOD: And this the sacred Oracles do indisputably declare, by instancing the several names, properties, and perfections which necessarily belong to God, and cannot possibly be ascribed to any inferior being. For, first, respecting the second person in the Holy Trinity; the SON, or WORD of God: St. John most clearly asserts his title to Divinity, in these memorable words, ch. i. ver. 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was GOD.* St. Paul declares no less expressly in 1st of Tim. ch. iii. ver. 16. *That God was manifested in the flesh* (meaning that the Divine nature was in the Son of Man, the Man Christ Jesus) *reconciling the world unto himself.* Again, Rom. ch. ix. ver. 5. *That Christ is over all blessed for ever;* and in Heb. ch. iv. ver. 12. *That the Word of God* (which may be here interpreted of the SON) *is sharper than a two-edged sword, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* Now no one can know the thoughts of the heart but God. St. John again, in ch. v. ver. 26. ascribes the chief attribute of the Deity to Christ, viz. his ETERNAL BEING. *For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath the Son life in himself. He is the same, and his years shall not fail,* saith St. Paul, Heb. ch. i. ver. 12. And St. John, ch. x. ver. 15. affirmeth another attribute of the Divine nature to be his right, and that is *perfection of all knowledge.*

As the Father knoweth me, so know I the Father. Whereby he maketh no manner of difference as to the extent of their intelligence of all things. And to close this list of Divine properties belonging to the Son, to him is given the whole work of creation itself. For *All things* (says the same evangelical defender of Christ's Divinity) John ch. i. ver. 3.) *were made by him, and without him was not any thing formed that was made.* Again, in ch. v. ver. 23. we are commanded to *honour the Son as we honour the Father*; and in the wondrous Revelations afforded to this favoured Apostle, it was shewn him, Rev. ch. vii. ver. 10. that the glorified saints above, sing their *Hallelujahs*, or songs of praise, *no less to the Lamb, than to God the Father, for ever and ever.* It is needless to multiply the evidence for this important truth, as what has been already produced, must stamp conviction of it very fully on the mind of every humble, and devout inquirer.

As to the titles, perfections, and mighty powers attributed to the *third* Holy Person, in the ever adorable Trinity, they are equally clear, numerous, and persuasive. For 1st, the Apostle St. Peter doth expressly style *Lying to the Holy Ghost*, to be the same as *lying to God*, whose Divine Spirit he is. And St. Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 16. doth with equal justness argue, that because the bodies of sincere and humble Christians are *the Temples of the Holy Ghost*, they may be truly said to be the *Temples of God*. If you require *further* marks of his possessing the peculiar attributes of the Deity, what
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plainer character of his Divinity can be delivered, than, *That he teacheth all things, guideth into all truth; foretelleth things to come; and searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.* All which properties are positively related of him in the Holy Scriptures, and if any thing can possibly strengthen this description, it is his being particularly called the SPIRIT OF GOD, in direct opposition to the *spirit of MAN*. This the Apostle illustrates fully, 1 Cor. ii. 11. For as a man's own spirit can only know the things concerning *himself*, so *the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*; from which reasoning, the Apostle concludes (as before observed) that they who act according to the spirit, are truly called the *Temple of the HOLY GHOST*, or, as he terms it elsewhere, *the Temples of GOD, for the Temple of God is holy, whose Temple ye are*; 1 Cor. iii. 17. Lastly, in regard to the Divine honours due unto the SON, as specified both in the Apostles blessing, and the form of Baptism; so the HOLY GHOST is equally joined with *God the Father*, and the *Son*, in those scriptural testimonies of their *equality*. And as neither the least degree of sense or reason will admit that *God would impart his Glory to another*, so the Divinity of the Holy Spirit is thereby equally established. And indeed, if we had only the following single text in point, it would have been abundantly sufficient to prove the fact, viz. That there is a *sin against HIM, which is said to be forgiven neither in this world, nor in the world to come*. Now this, in no respect, could be asserted of any other being but GOD, because it is impossible that such

offence could ever be committed against a *lower order of being*. The whole of our belief then, concerning the ever Blessed Trinity, may be comprised in these few words of the first article of our Church.

“ That there is but one living, and true God,
 “ everlasting, without body (that is, any form of
 “ which we can have idea) without parts, or pas-
 “ sions (that is, any divided substance, or possible
 “ degree of suffering) but of infinite power, wis-
 “ dom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of
 “ all things, both visible and invisible, and in the
 “ unity of this Godhead, there be three Persons,
 “ of one substance, power, and eternity. The
 FATHER, SON and HOLY GHOST, or in other words,
 THE TRINITY IN UNITY.

It having now, I trust, been sufficiently made clear to you, that this doctrine is truly *scriptural*: The second objection presents itself for our examination, viz. 2. *Whether this being a mystery we can be culpable for not believing it.*

Now a mystery being something above the powers of human understanding (that is, involving some secret meaning) the question is, how far we are bound to give our assent, to what we do not comprehend. To this we answer, that the deep things of God are NECESSARILY mysterious, and in this consists the blessing of a *Divine Revelation*, and the very nature of *Faith*. For faith is defined by the Apostle to be *the evidence of things not seen*. Now because it is impossible, that in our present weak and limited condition, we can intimately discern the unsearchable wisdom of the Almighty, he
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has been pleased to reveal, or make known these things as proper objects of our faith; to exercise our humility, and to improve and strengthen our trust in Him. And as we must be sure, that the Scripture is the word of God, we are therefore strictly bound to believe whatever is delivered therein, to be *necessary for our salvation*. Further, as we cannot be insensible, that we are incompetent of ourselves alone, to *merit* our salvation; we cannot possibly encourage any valuable hope of it unless we believe in *Him whom God hath sent*: and if it is true, that we can receive pardon of *none but Him*, in whom *alone* there is any life or happiness. In truth, if we *need* pardon from Him only, whom *only we have offended* (that is, to whom, by a depraved nature, we are become hateful, He being all perfection) consequently it is to *God only* that we must look. It can be no less a Being that has saved us, or that *could* do it. This, indeed, God, by the inspired teaching of his Servants, has positively revealed, or declared to be the case, *That He was in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself*. Here, then, is the grand article of our Faith, on which the hope of Christian glory rests; and this (however wonderful the mystery) we *must believe*. Great, in truth, saith the Apostle, is *the mystery of Godliness* (or of man's redemption.) The pride, ignorance, and perverseness of men, indeed, ever have been so notorious, that many suppose themselves excusable for disbelieving every thing but what they positively behold with their outward senses; and we find this sad degeneracy of nature carried

carried to the greatest length; even in the conduct of one of Christ's own disciples, on which occasion our Blessed Master exalts the value of *faith*, in the directest terms: *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believe.*

Nor, in fact, can any thing be more absurd, presuming, or dangerous, than to encourage an unbelief of God's ways or dealings, because they are MYSTERIOUS. For what is all nature but a mystery? And if we will believe nothing but what we *thoroughly understand*, we may even deny the evidence of our *senses*. For as our Lord illustrates the way of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, by the plainest of comparisons; so may we as well deny the power of the wind, or air, because we *know not whence it cometh, or whither it goeth*; or the genial virtue of the sun upon the earth; because we cannot see minutely *how* it operateth on *various matter* (though the *effect* of both declare the power of their cause, to *demonstration*) as to doubt the truth of God's wonderful revelations of Himself, because we do not thoroughly comprehend his several dispensations and methods of acting, and *how these things can be*. Marvellous, no doubt, are the manifold mysteries of God's love to man, and to the full as much above his present shallow abilities completely to account for, as is the clear and perfect knowledge of God's triune nature, or the doctrine of the *Trinity*. As for example, the *incarnation* of the Son of God; the necessity and all-sufficient propitiation of his *death*; the secret power of his

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his *miracles*; the astonishing exertion of God's *mercy*, in order to satisfy his *justice*; the creation of this world and all things in it; the kingdom of Satan; the kingdom of grace; these are among the stupendous mysteries which *even the Angels desire to look into*; and if they are too hard for THEM, shall we *that are made lower than they*, on purpose to be crowned with glory through *faith* in the truth, and power of God, shall we start aside, and forfeit all our happiness, because these deep things of God elude the slender powers of human reason? And if with all the surprising faculties, with which the Creator hath endowed his creatures; if after all our learning, study, industry to cultivate those gifts, and the experience of ages added to the utmost penetration of the brightest genius or capacity, the commonest operations of the animal and vegetable world exceed our knowledge, and lead us to adore and magnify the wisdom of the Almighty Author, whose ways *are past finding out*; is it at all surprising, that we should be incompetent to judge, or reason, upon what the human *eye hath never seen, nor ear heard, nor can enter into the heart or imagination of a mere mortal creature to conceive*? Is it a rational plea for infidelity, that we do not exactly comprehend the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the particular manner of the existence of the three persons in the Divine Nature? Surely, none who have any becoming sense of their own deplorable imperfections at the *very best*, but will confess their *insufficiency for these things*, and humbly exclaim with the Psalmist, cxxxix. 6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it*

is high, I cannot attain unto it; or with Holy Job, xxxiv. 32. That which I see not, teach Thou me to believe. For thus is the Almighty represented to argue with this upright servant, xxxvi. 14. *Hearken unto me, O Job, stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.* Thus did the wisest and best of men submit their rush-light of reason to the dazzling blaze of Divine intelligence! Thus did the Most High vouchsafe to argue with the sons of men, even concerning his *sublunary wonders*; how then, without impious arrogance, and excess of folly, shall we dare to dispute the propriety and secret relations of *heavenly things*?

From what I have offered upon this second head, I hope we may fairly conclude, that it is by no means unreasonable to *believe* the things which God has thought proper to reveal to us of the Divine nature, although at present, we cannot *fully comprehend* them. The third particular I promised to consider, was, whether because a thing surpasses our limited powers of understanding, that therefore it must be esteemed as *inconsistent* with perfect reason. Now this we must as positively *deny*, unless we can suppose that God, who is the fountain of all reason, would propose a thing to *contradict* it, which is so monstrous an hypothesis, that it is quite superfluous to dwell upon it. The few following observations will, I trust, remove all doubt upon the subject. The most perfect religion, then, is only another name for the *best reason*, improved to its highest degree of excellence, and the sublimest reason, which is only the union of truth and good sense,

sense, will lead us naturally to *Revelation*: for reason is modest, and knows its sphere; reason does never oppose the value of mysteries; nor do mysteries contradict reason, in the genuine meaning of the word; on the contrary, reason teaches us, by daily experience, that as our capacities are *finite*, or *bounded*, and the perfections of the Deity *infinite*, or *unbounded*, the latter must consequently be *above our reach*. And as *natural* light did never yet (in the mind of a truly wise man) pretend to equal the *Divine* light, so there can be no just ground from reason, to dispute or disbelieve a doctrine, which we have all imaginable cause to think, has been proposed to us, for the wisest ends; although we find our present faculties are not sufficient to conceive the *manner*.

As far as God has thought proper, or needful, he has vouchsafed to *lead* our reason to admit the certainty of his revelation, even upon this difficult subject; and this appears most eminently, in the very words of the verse that follows my text, where by a comparison that is *level* to reason, and drawn from the customs of mankind, He condescends to add, that as the three persons in the Trinity, bear record in Heaven as to this particular description of the nature of God, (viz. the *Father*, by whom the *design* of our salvation was formed, and who revealed it so early to the prophets; the *Son*, or Divine Word, whose great business it was by such wonderful humiliations, and sufferings, to bring it into *execution*, and *complete* it; and the *Holy Ghost*, who *seals* it, and *applies* it to believers,) and that as these three are one, in

in the agreement of their testimony, so are they likewise in the perfection of their nature; and each worthy of such divine honors as cannot be communicated to any *creature*: and thus in all disputes about human affairs, as the positive testimonies of two or three credible witnesses, is thought sufficient to determine the truth, in any court of justice, and the Jews allowed it by their own law to be so; so there are three on *earth*, who bear witness to this truth; (1.) the *spirit* sent from *above*, by its sanctifying and miraculous operations, which gave witness by a voice from heaven, that Christ, the Savior of the world, was God's beloved Son; (2.) the water of *baptism*, to which sacrament he vouchsafed to submit; and (3.) the innocent *blood* he shed upon the cross, when both blood and water issued from his side, and proved his death by the separation of those fluids. Now the representation of this, is still continued in the sacramental wine; and both these sacraments are intended through all ages, to preserve the *memory* of these surprizing facts. These three, then, do equally agree *in one* proof, and join to promote the same end, by establishing the Gospel in the world *. And the Apostle
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* This is the generally received interpretation of this text. But as I am endeavouring to adopt my argument to the *lowest* capacity, I would humbly submit, whether it would not bear *another* sense, by way of rendering the nature of this union still more *familiar* to the human understanding: and whether we may not be enabled to form some judgment of the *necessity*, and *reality* of it, by considering the words as they may be applied to the composition of a *living body*. Thus, *There are three things, also, that*

infers this positive duty from the above, as an act of faith, *that if we receive the witness of men*; if our reason and senses convince us of *one* truth, the *witness of God* (this expresses revelation of the things that concern himself) is *greater*, and ought by stronger consequence, to command our *faith in his word*. For surely, if the testimony of two or three men be thought sufficient to give credit to any matter of fact, in all earthly courts, the testimony of that God, who cannot lie, or possibly deceive us, must be of greater force to confirm belief in us. But to leave us without excuse, for want of all-sufficient evidence, the Apostle adds, that this is the witness of God, even that which he hath testified of, and by his Son.

Before I conclude, it may be useful to add a few words more upon the subject of the particular creed,

that bear witness upon earth, as to the truth of this mysterious doctrine, viz. *the spirit, the water, and the blood*, which though different in their operations to produce, and continue life, are yet each essentially necessary to form *one living creature*; for neither the blood, nor the water, nor both together, would be sufficient to animate the creature, without the spirit or breath; and the spirit alone, could not possibly constitute a human body. The conclusion, therefore, from this present illustration, is most obvious, that as it is by no means contradictory to reason, to say that these three are *one body*, though they are certainly *distinct things*, which are essential in their union, to its *existence*, and that we know not the *secret and necessary* manner of their union, so we are led to resolve, with equal truth, that what is said of TRINITY IN UNITY is absolutely true (as far as our present powers of mind can comprehend it,) though from the *weakness* of those powers, we cannot pronounce exactly, *how* the union is effected in *one* case, more than in the other.

we are enjoined by our church to use this day ; and as it is allowed by all true believers, for above these thousand years, to contain the sum of the purest divinity, it cannot fail to strike us as a very natural clause, the pronouncing *condemnation* on those who deny the truth thereof. But still, in justice to the creed itself, no less than for the relief of those, who have taken prejudice against it ; it may be necessary to observe, that it does by no means require all persons to assent to every verse of it, on pain of *everlasting punishment*, and who (because of many things they may not understand) object to use it, lest they should condemn themselves. For all that it insists upon, as *necessary to salvation*, is, *that before all other things, we hold or maintain, the catholic or general Christian faith*, which faith the third and fourth verses thus explain : *That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance ; that is, guarding against the worship of more Gods than one ; and yet not denying the essential divinity of each person.* This, I say, is declared to be *positively necessary to be believed* ; but all that follows to the twenty-sixth verse, is only brought as *proof, or illustration* of this, and therefore no more exacts our belief, (if we do not comprehend it) than the whole of any sermon does which is composed to explain *one* text of scripture. For in the latter case, the *text* we know is the word of God, and necessary to be believed ; but no one can be bound to believe every *particular* of the sermon under pain of *condemnation*. For this reason, therefore, the creed breaks off at the

twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses from this illustration of the essential doctrine, and returns again to the verses which only declare the faith before related, as necessary to salvation: and all the rest of the creed, from the twenty-seventh portion of it to the end, relates entirely to our Saviour's incarnation, which being a positive article of the Christian faith, it is needless to insist further upon that subject.

There are a great variety of other texts which might be produced from Holy Writ, to defend the truth of this most holy doctrine, and many valuable arguments might be drawn from each, to prove that it is by no means incompatible with reason, however above the reach of it, in its present contracted state. But enough has been advanced at this time, to give you both a competent knowledge of the *day*, and *doctrine*. The essential import of the service of this day, directs us to submit the vain suggestions of our own imperfect reason, *to the obedience of faith*, in all God's holy mysteries. To believe, whatever we are assured He hath revealed, and never to be so rash, or weak, as to harbour doubts because the points are not exactly level to our understanding. The following, will be found no trifling argument to supply a general degree of satisfaction on the subject: That though these things *are bid in one sense from the wise of this world*, no less than from the men of *lower attainment*, yet *are they revealed unto very babes*; that is, to all who lean not on their *own ability* to guide them in the truth, but who encourage a lowly trust, that God's most precious gifts

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and graces, may belong to *all* upon an equal principle of *bumble faith* in his most Holy Word, and of observing the precepts and conditions of his covenant in Christ, God grant us all grace to abide by the terms of this *sure promise*, and so to embrace this grand mystery of our salvation, that we may procure an interest in our Redeemer's merits, who alone can reconcile us to the favor of an all perfect God.—To Him, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Three Persons, and One God in mystical Trinity united, be ascribed all glory, praise, and power for ever and ever, Amen.

SERMON XIII.

FOR SACRAMENT SUNDAY MORNING,
IN THE TIME OF HARVEST*.

PSALM lxxv. 2, 3.

*Thou that bearest prayer unto Thee shall all flesh come.
My misdeeds prevail against me, O be thou merciful
unto my sin.*

I PURPOSE, my brethren, to consider the principal parts of this Psalm as they convey *spiritual* instruction, under the figure of *temporal* blessings: and the subject, I trust, will appear peculiarly applicable at *this time*, on *two* accounts: First, as we are invited in a more than ordinary manner by the Holy Institution we are met this day to celebrate, to approach the Divine Being, who hath promised to *bear our prayers*; and to whom *all flesh must come* for the refreshing hope of mercy; for, *as our misdeeds cannot fail to prevail against us*, so

* This discourse was composed on purpose to excite a general sense of gratitude at this Blessed Season of Harvest, and the subject is assisted and enriched by the use of Bishop Horne's Commentary on this Psalm: *Preached on a Sacrament Sunday.*

is it necessary that we should *confess* them, in order to obtain *forgiveness*; and, this indeed is the most essential part of our preparation for the solemn service we are now about to perform.

Secondly; as we have at this particular season, such substantial proofs of God's undeserved goodness all around us, this may help to fill our hearts with *gratitude*, and convey a more lively sense of the future harvest ~~of grace upon~~ the *soul*, under the *figure* of God's providential provision for the *body*.

1. The subject then, of my endeavours at this time, will be to establish the *necessity* of a true sorrow for our sins, and

2. To set forth the praise that is due to the Almighty, for his manifold mercies vouchsafed to us his unworthy creatures.

In the opening of this beautiful Psalm, the Prophet describes as follows; WHERE God is to be praised. *Thou, O God, art to be praised in Sion; and unto Thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem.* The offerings of praise and thanksgiving, and all solemn vows to God, were formerly made in the ~~Temple~~, on mount Sion; in the appointed place, or *Church*, where God had pleased that his Name should be honored. This was a figure of every visible or national Church that should be settled in after ages, as the place wherein we must worship God, and perform our Christian rites and religious service to him. As therefore the promise of man's redemption by the sacrifice of the Son of God, was delivered at *Jerusalem* so (according to the evangelical inter-

interpretation of a pious Prelate * of our own Church) "since this event, and the call of the
 " Gentiles, the *Christian Church* has been the Holy
 " City and Temple. In her communion, we are
 " to offer up our devotions, and to perform the
 " vows of obedience which we made in Baptism,
 " until we come to the Heavenly Sion, to pay
 " our vows with the Church triumphant, in ever-
 " lasting hymns of praise," for our deliverance.

Agreeable, therefore, to the Psalmist's practice, we must more particularly, on this occasion, endeavour to possess our hearts with a grateful sense of due praise to God the Father, for His mercy in hearing the prayers of us unworthy servants; and indeed, it is the hope that He will hear our prayers, that encourages *all flesh to come unto him*, that is, all mankind, out of every nation, who by his gracious call, by the blessings of the Gospel delivered to the world, have grace to make their supplications before him in his Church.

Who that examines his own heart carefully, (which is one *essential* preparation for the solemn service of the Holy Communion) but must use the Psalmist's words, and acknowledge with sorrow, and confusion, *that his misdeeds prevail against him*; who can avoid complaining in the language of St. Paul, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* from this sinful nature, from the effects of carnal desires, from the deplorable weakness of body, and mind, derived to us.

* The late truly excellent Bishop of Norwich, Dr. George Home,

by a corrupted constitution; from the trouble and grief that this causes us *here*, and (what is of infinitely more serious consequence) from the *eternal* punishment due to so much impurity and imperfection? The *first* part of the verse contains a just acknowledgment of our guilt, the true spirit, in which we must approach the table of the Lord, which the very *best* must feel and own, as long as they are in the flesh: and which renders it so very necessary that we should lose *no opportunity* of applying for fresh recruits of strength, to help in time of need; and that of all *other* means we should be particularly careful to employ this *special* means of grace which the second part of the verse holds out to us in these words: *O be thou merciful to our sins*, which is the very language of the humble publican: *God be merciful to me a sinner!* And to all who approach him with a truly broken, and contrite heart, He doubtless *will* be merciful; since, as the words may be more expressively translated; ‘as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away,’ so they contain a *full* assurance of pardon through the blood of the Lamb; and agree exactly with the answer which the Apostle returneth upon the sinner’s lamentation of his state in the Epistle to the Romans, vii. 14. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*—If God *should be extreme to mark what is done amiss* (my brethren) O! who could abide *his sentence!* Who could pretend to satisfy the rigid justice of infinite perfection! Beset on all sides, both within, and without, by the enemies of our salvation; to whom can we fly; on what can we depend,

depend, but the *rich mercy* of God in Jesus Christ? Without faith in his precious, all sufficient sacrifice, we must be most miserable; and who then, with any sense of their wretched state by *nature*, would refuse such plenteous redemption as is offered in Christ's Holy Sacrament? Even *pardon* of what is *past*, and grace to help in *time to come*; hope to support us in our warfare, and strength to prevent our backslidings; the blessed earnest that our sins are *blotted out*, and a principle of godly life to render us acceptable, when we are presented to the Father in Christ's name. *Thus will the man be blessed whom God chooses*, and receives unto himself; as the 4th verse expresses it, *He shall dwell in God's courts, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of his House, even of his Holy Temple.*

Now all such are *you* (my brethren) if ye do not refuse to hear the voice of the charming invitation of your Blessed Lord and Savior. For all *who live godly in Christ Jesus*, who obey his holy ordinances, in a pure faith, that they were mercifully designed to convey to them the powerful grace they stand in need of; all such, may be truly said to be chosen out of the world, that is, delivered from it's captivating scenes, and temptations. All such are happily admitted to the privilege of Christ's Church; and you cannot fail to see, and grant, that all who do *not* accept these invitations, exclude themselves from the benefits therein promised to them. The *latter*, refuse to *dwell* in his courts; to come to his Church and his Sacraments, and therefore, they cannot, in reason, *expect to be satisfied with the*

sure pleasures of his house. But we may justly suppose that these words describe the more particular blessing of those, who are *chosen out of the congregation*, to minister in holy things, and thus more especially to dwell in God's courts. These, if faithful to their trust, shall experience such pleasures, as pass all description, even the glorious hope, that accompanies the turning of sinners unto God. Such, do I *devoutly wish*, my brethren, my humble labours for your final interests may prove; so would I have you cultivate the duties I constantly recommend; which you may be sure I should not press so *earnestly* upon you, but that I am convinced your everlasting happiness or misery, depends upon your present compliance with, these my affectionate injunctions, or the neglect of those outward means of grace which are appointed to improve your minds, and forward your happiness by qualifying all your best endeavors. And if such glorious rewards are promised to excite our diligence for your welfare, (even as unworthy instruments under the influence of the *divine assistance*;) in what an exalted sense must the man Christ Jesus be blessed, whom God has now received to sit for ever at his right hand in Heaven: *Elect, precious, chosen of God to be our High Priest for ever to make intercession for his people in the courts of Heaven, that where he is, they may be also.* When we think of these precious things to come (my brethren) shall we slacken in our endeavors to be of the number of this chosen people, shall we refuse the pleasures of his house and table on earth, which will fit us for becoming partakers

partakers of his holy temple in Heaven? The *former* is only a *figure* of the *latter*, and we must pass through the *outer court* in godly, humble service, before we can be admitted into the *inner* tabernacle of light, and glory.

To such, then, as do submit to be taught in this life, in the manner God's wisdom has thought proper to propose for their regeneration, may the promise in the fifth verse be applied: That the God of our salvation *will shew us wonderful things in righteousness*. And what are they? Why, that by the influence of his Holy Spirit on the hearts of all who apply to him in *faith*, they shall be *ashamed*, and *sorry* for their sins, in which they have heretofore indulged their carnal nature. They shall not only *for sake* them, but *bring forth the fruits of righteousness*: for if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; *old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new.* (2 Cor. v. 17.) These things then must be allowed no less desirable than wonderful; and thus most truly is our *Savior the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who remain in the broad sea*; that is, the inhabitants of the most distant nations and islands who have believed in the Lord Jesus.

For as by the death and resurrection of Christ, we have seen the overthrow of idolatry, and the conversion of many nations, so is the hope of all people strengthened by the salvation that he has promised. And by the prayers of the church which *now is*, will *further* wonderful things in righteousness be revealed, at the second coming of the Son of God, in the glory of his Father.

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In the sixth, and seventh verses, the Psalmist proceeds to confirm the faith of God's servants, in these glorious expectations, by a further description of the mighty power of our defence; and by continuing the figure of a Rock, and Mountain, to describe the lasting glory of his church. *For He who in his strength setteth fast the mountains of the earth, and is girded about with power; (that is, whose will and pleasure are above all control,) He who originally laid the foundation of the world so that it should never move out of its course, who stilleth the raging of the sea, who saith peace, and it is calm, much more is engaged in honor of his word, to support and preserve his church; and never to suffer the waves of this troublesome world to overwhelm the mountain of his holiness; his holy hill of Sion. Nay he has promised, that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it; that is, all the arts and wiles of Satan, and the whole host or legions of his evil spirits, and malicious instruments.*

Now this mountain of God's holiness, this temple, or his church, is composed of his faithful servants wherever he hath published the Gospel of his Son; that is, the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ. And to every obedient member of that church, hath he engaged to make good these precious promises: those who come to him in his Son's name, will he never cast out: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you, as he declareth, 2 Chron. xv. 2. *For his wrath is against them that forsake him.* Ezra viii. 22. Wherefore, my brethren,

brethren, it behoves every one of us for himself, to attend to these warnings, and not to forsake God's holy covenants, and ordinances ; *for all that forsake the Lord now, shall be ashamed*, saith the Prophet Jeremiah xvii. 13. And to the same effect is Christ's own declaration, Luke ix. 26. *That whosoever should be ashamed of him and his words in this generation, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the Holy Angels.* In proportion, therefore, as *our misdeeds prevail against us* ; as we are sensible of our manifold failings, offences, and provocations, against a long-suffering God ; against a Savior who hath done such great things for us ; the more doth it concern us to fall low on our knees at the footstool of his grace, and to implore him to be merciful unto our sins. Not to slight, but to lay hold on the *offers* of acceptance, on the *means* of reconciliation and amendment, now while it is day, while the hour of trial is afforded us. Not to harden our hearts by deferring our repentance, lest the deceitfulness of sin should gain such possession of us, that when we *would* repent, we shall neither have *time*, or *power*.

Let no rash example of the multitude prevent us from seeing the things that *belong to our peace*, lest they be for ever bid from our eyes ; for we must not follow the *multitude to do evil*. However the heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, God can visit *kingdoms* equally, as *individuals*, with his judgments : he humbleth, and punisheth the *madness of the people*, at his pleasure ; *so that they also, who dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, shall be afraid at his tokens,*

tokens, who maketh the outgoings of the morning, and evening to praise him.

The tokens, or signs, mentioned in this verse, are the effects of the divine power, and mercy, called in the verse above, *wonderful things in righteousness*. At the first publication of the Gospel, the mighty wonders which the Lord shewed forth through the power of his Holy Spirit, produced a saving fear of God among the nations dwelling in the uttermost parts of the earth. *The isles* (saith the Prophet Isaiah on the same occasion) *saw it and feared, the ends of the earth were afraid, they drew near and came* (ch. xli. 5.) And thus it was that God might truly be said, to make the *outgoings of the morning and the evening to praise him*; so that all who had enjoyed the blessed return of night and day; that is, all the inhabitants of the earth, where his sound had gone forth, where his Gospel had reached, were made to rejoice in God their Savior, whose name was praised from the rising, to the setting sun, from one end of the earth to the other.

Thus doth the former part of this beautiful psalm present us with the wisdom and benefit of *setting our misdeeds continually before us*: of exercising a godly sorrow for our sins, and of imploring God's forgiveness, by using every means of obtaining mercy at his hands; by praising him in his holy house, by submitting to his wholesome laws, and ordinances; and by serious repentance, and actual amendment of life, to prepare ourselves for a more perfect enjoyment of his glorious presence, when

our day of trial shall be closed, and all the interests of this life become as *nothing* to us.

Now, then, that a sober and religious course of living is so strongly recommended to us by the lively figure of God's *outward bounties*; now, that the *manifest gifts* of his Providence call forth our gratitude, in so *great a degree*; we should be doubly careful to obey him in every respect that his wisdom hath appointed for our sanctification, and becoming his true and faithful servants. If plentiful times, and favorable seasons, and the blessings of health and prosperity, will not warm the heart, towards the worship and service of that bountiful Author of all the good things we do, or *can* enjoy; hard, cold, and unconverted, must all such appear; much does it behove them to pray to God, to turn their hearts of *stone*, to a proper sense of *feeling*, lest they die in their sins, in the blindness of an unconverted state, that is, dead to the needful work of God's grace upon the soul; to all the gracious means, temporal and spiritual, which He ordains to bring them to a right sense of their state by *nature*; of their short, and uncertain continuance *here*; and of the endless misery that awaits all those who do not profit by God's warnings and mercies. It is not only the highest *duty*, but the greatest *interest* of people, to listen to the indulgent method of God's drawing their hearts towards him, lest they provoke him to visit them in wrath, instead of mercy. Both prosperity and adversity are equally in his power, and those whom he cannot bring near him by the chords of *love*, he is often obliged to
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awaken by *wounding judgments*. This his universal desire for his creatures happiness renders absolutely expedient. Not that God takes pleasure in the *temporal* miseries of mankind, any more than he wishes *eternal death* to the sinner: but such is the depravity of human nature, that many are so blind and deaf to every kind invitation, but what moves them by *correction*, that they persist in abusing the gentleness of God's calls. They cannot perceive the hand that showers his blessings upon their affairs, and would thereby graciously incline them to *gratitude*, and *obedience*. Such, I fear, we may pronounce to be the thankless state of a considerable portion of the world; they consider not to whom only, they are indebted for all the good things they enjoy, nor the easy acknowledgment and necessary *return*, that is required from them.

And where it unhappily appears, that people still continue deaf to every godly caution and advice, it then behoves all Christians, and the Ministers of God's word and sacraments, more *particularly*, most earnestly, and constantly, *to pray* for them; *that He would turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*. By this brotherly exercise of Christian love, we shall cultivate that charity, which is necessary to be felt in every devout heart; and thereby prepare ourselves in the *very best manner*, for the receiving that further measure of grace, which the most perfect Christian still stands in need of, and which is graciously held out to *all*, who with a pure spirit of *humility*, a pious *obedience*, and perfect *charity*, call upon God through Jesus Christ

Christ to save them from this untoward generation. And as we are now about to commemorate the mysteries of that wondrous love, which alone devised the *means*, and procured the *power* of supplying these needful graces to degenerated creatures; let us lift up our hearts with one accord in pious supplication to the Almighty Being, who hath created and redeemed us; that we may approach the Table of our Lord at this time, with holy reverence, and obtain such a portion of his good Spirit, as may enable us to serve him *devoutly* and *sincerely* HERE, and fit us for a place in his heavenly kingdom HEREAFTER. And this we beg for his infinite merit's sake, and through his gracious and most needful mediation. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c.

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SERMON XIV.

FOR SACRAMENT SUNDAY EVENING,
IN THE TIME OF HARVEST.

PSALM lxxv. 9.

*Thou visitest the earth, and blessest it, Thou makest
it very plenteous.*

IN my discourse this morning, my brethren, I explained to you as much of the *former* part of this beautiful song of David, as seemed more particularly suited to the occasion of that awful, and important Christian service, which some of us have had the grace *again* to offer up, in obedience to the positive commands of the Blessed Author of our salvation. May the humble endeavors of all who were thus piously disposed, prove instrumental to the enriching their souls with every necessary grace, for the forwarding their eternal happiness! May we all experience such a further degree of strength or resignation, as may be expedient for the respective circumstances of our present lives; that we may not be deceived, and led astray by *prosperity*; nor tempted, and subdued should *disappointment*, or *calamity* overtake us!

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The *second* portion of this Psalm presents us with the universal goodness of the Divine Creator, and Preserver of all things; and affords a very useful subject of general meditation at this *particular* season of the year. I shall consider the remaining verses of the Psalm, therefore, both in their *literal*, and *spiritual* sense, as a subject to stir up your *gratitude* to the Author of every *good gift*; to render us duly thankful for the *manifold bounties* we receive at his hands, during this our earthly pilgrimage; and by shewing you how the different descriptions of God's earthly favors do clearly represent the *better* things he has in store for them who love him, to make you *wise unto salvation*.

Under the beautiful image or figure of a once *barren*, and *dry land*, the Psalmist in the words of the text, and the following verses, 'doth represent' to us God's gracious visitation of his Church, or 'chosen servants, by the fruitful influence of his 'Holy Spirit.' As his good-will and power, are positively necessary to *visit the earth and bless it*, or without his permission, it would *never be very plentiful*; as the soil of the ground is rendered fruitful by timely showers of rain, and its produce ripened by the needful warmth of the sun, thus turning dearth into plentifulness; so must the soil of the human heart be refreshed with the regenerating spirit of God's grace, or it will for ever remain exposed to the sentence of the law. As the ground you till, would continue under the curse pronounced against *it*, (upon man's first disobedience) but for God's daily blessing upon the human means to render it
fertile;

fertile; so, unless the *sun of righteousness* shines upon our *souls*, they will continue as dead, and unprofitable, as to every *valuable produce*, as the earth would be (notwithstanding all your *culture* of it) without the benefit of the *sun that rules by day*. The Prophet Isaiah hath the very same thought with the Holy David on this occasion, concerning the flourishing of Christ's kingdom, through the Gospel, and the needful assistance of God's grace, lv. 10. *For as the rain cometh down from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth, and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it.* Thus you see, the riches of grace and mercy poured upon the minds of men, from the never-failing treasures of God, are compared to a river that is full of water; to God's preparing for the corn, and providing the earth with its increase. Thus is this bountiful provision made by the word of the Gospel, intended to relieve that *spiritual* famine, which before this blessed mark of God's love for men's souls, *had been sore in all lands*.

Again, The progress of God's grace upon the heart, is still further, and more particularly represented in the several lively figures of the eleventh verse; for as by God's providence *He watereth the furrows of the earth, and sendeth rain into the little vallies thereof, as he maketh it wet with little drops of rain, and thereby bleisseth the*

increase of it. As he does more by his wise contrivance in the effects of one gentle shower, than the utmost art of man could bring forth, even if he could obtain water, and time enough, to refresh the thirsty earth: so are we most plainly taught, the essential difference between *our* best exertions for the welfare of our own souls, and God's *all sufficient help*. By what is our lot and appointment to *do* for the *earth*, we are shewn our positive duty of *striving* to gain Heaven: at the same time, that neither the one, or the other, would yield *any harvest*, without God's *help*, and *blessing*. But to keep closer to the comparison.—As after the ground is plowed up, *the former rain* descending upon the ridges, and running into the furrows, softeneth the stubborn clods of the earth, and so prepareth it for the purpose of covering the seed intended to be sown in it; and as the *latter rain* is equally necessary to assist the springing up, and forwarding the growth thereof into a joyful Harvest; thus doth the good spirit of God both prepare the hearts of the people for the reception of his holy word, and also enable them to bring forth fruit some an Hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty.

And here also, we have an invaluable lesson held out to us of the necessity of our *own industry*, in *one* case, as well as the *other*. The slothful servant in neither case, can expect an equal reward with the careful, and diligent husbandman. Though after all that man can do, without sun and rain, his labor would return but little profit; yet without he

he improved the soil, sowed the seed, and kept down the weeds, which naturally spring up amongst it, he would have no right to expect the blessings of God, or that miracles should be wrought for him; so (in a *spiritual* sense,) if we do not employ those talents already intrusted to us; if we despise the ordinary means and measure of grace that God affords by his *word*, his *church*, and *ministers*; we have no right or reason to expect the blessing of his preventing, or assisting grace (however needful for us after all we can do ourselves) for He does not commonly work miracles in *grace*, any more than in *NATURE*. On the contrary to encourage our obedience, care, and best endeavours in *religious* pursuits, as well as *temporal* concerns, he has shewn us in the parable of the *talents*, that he who doth not make the utmost use of those allotted him, shall have even the smallest taken from him, and that as a wise and just Lord, he requireth only the increase of that portion he has respectively appointed to each servant's abilities, and station; and though (as before observed) a blessing of God is necessary to attend our *smaller* labor, no less than our most *earnest diligence*, yet the sentence of the slothful servant, shall be, to be *cast into outer darkness*.

The next verse of this beautiful psalm, describes the blessed appearance of the country all around us; and the happiness of the present fruitful season, in the clearest, aptest, and strongest terms imaginable; for surely God hath *mercifully crowned the year with his goodness, and his clouds have dropped fatness upon the land*.

We need only ride round the fields, to be obliged to confess the truth of this his blessing upon the industrious labor of his creatures. And here again, all must acknowledge his universal care, and gracious bounty: for *his sun shineth on the just and the unjust*, in this gracious provisions of the rich fruits of harvest. That *bread may be supplied to the eater*. He overlooketh the manifold failings and ingratitude of *particular persons*, and blesteth them *alike*; so that the *multitude* shall not suffer for the iniquity of *individuals*. Thus, as was intimated in my former discourse, God, according to his all perfect and loving nature, would touch the hearts of men by the rich overflowings of his mercy, and bounty, rather than by the dreadful scourge of *dearth*, and *famine*. And by thus smiting the conscience of many, with a sense of his long suffering and great kindness, in the returns of these undeserved blessings to them, in common with their neighbors, he would recall them to a sense of *duty*, that by confessing their ingratitude, and sin against him, He might engage them by the *cords of love*, to turn, and serve him as they ought to do. Now if this is a lesson to the very *best* of us, who fall far short of the mercies we receive, how much more ought it to work upon the *profane*, and *disobedient*, and make *them tremble* to provoke the future vengeance of the Lord, who hath *many* sore plagues, besides dearth, and famine. And although the Lord may for a *time* spare the city, for the *ten's* sake, —for his sure *promise* sake, to them who serve him *truly*; yet the thoughtless and the^t wicked should
fear,

fear, lest when the trial of the few faithful is completed; a *general* vengeance should overtake the stubborn and the guilty. They would do well to remember, that though the righteous fall in the great number who provoke the Lord to punish; yet *they* are only delivered from the *greater evil to come*, in witnessing heavier calamities upon their devoted fellow-creatures; that *they* immediately enter into *eternal rest, and joy*, while the wicked, and rebellious, are condemned to *endless punishment*.

God's crowning the year with goodness, will admit of two very proper, easy, and beautiful interpretations. In the sense of *crowning* any thing, we mean to put a happy end to any pursuit; thus in a worldly acceptation of the expression, God crowns, or finishes the labour of the year, with the comfortable and joyous gifts of *harvest*. In this verse, the Psalmist finely describes the herbs, fruits, and flowers of the earth, as a lovely crown set upon her head by the Great Creator. at whose command the heavens collecting and distilling the occasional drops of rain, perfect her produce, and make her the parent of general blessings. It likewise contains a *spiritual* meaning, which as *christians*, my brethren, it will greatly profit us ever to keep in view; and that is, that this same God will crown with everlasting goodness the acceptable year of the Lord, that is, the year of his *redeemed*, when the spirit of his grace shall have accomplished the work of his kingdom upon earth; when God shall be glorified in his saints, and hea-

ven as well as earth shall be full of the gladness of Jehovah. And here the comparison again supplies us with fresh proof of God's great love to us; for though after all we can do, we are most truly, unprofitable servants to *him*, since the exercises of religion are as needful for our own happiness, as our present labours are for our worldly support, still he blesses *both, far beyond our deserts*; for what is all we can do for God's sake, in proportion to the riches he has promised to the obedient? What can the *best* of us do, without his *help*, and how gracious must he be for rewarding us for what he even *enables* us to perform? All that he requires is *sincerity* in our endeavours, and to use those *means*, which he has appointed to convey strength and power to his creatures; and in fact, to accomplish the greatest happiness of our souls, even more than possibly can be conceived by us in the present corrupted state. That, then, which we are directed to pray for in the next verse, is that these refreshing clouds of heavenly dew, may drop on the dwellings of our *hearts*, in this wilderness of our earthly sojourning. That is, in a *spiritual* sense, that we may receive faith and grace, to bring forth the works of righteousness, that so as the rain which descendeth from heaven, causeth even the barren wilderness to become a green pasture, and clotheth the dry and naked hills with garments of joy, and gladness (in which sense the *little hills are said to rejoice on every side*), so the spirit of God, when poured out from on high upon the gentile world of old, converted that wilderness into a fruitful field, while

the churches rising on all sides, like little fertile hills, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We should pray, that thus it may be with all *our churches*, which, according to the figure used by the Psalmist, we see towering all around the land we live in; that their ministers may be blessed with the grace of the spirit of God; rightly to divide the word, to the conviction and conversion of the sinner; and that grace may be shed abroad in all our hearts; that as according to the happy effect of God's visiting the earth, the vallies stand thick with corn, as he blesteth the folds with fulness of sheep; so all *these signs* which are used in a propheticall sense, in Scripture, to point out to us *better things*, may be received by us, as *there intended*, to signify the times of consolation, and refreshment, of peace and fruitfulness in the church, which breaks forth with joy in one case, as the world is always ready to do in the other.

It is a most just and lively figure with which the prophet concludes this joyful Psalm, *that the vallies shall stand so thick with corn, that they shall laugh and sing*. This is a poetical mode of speech which you may all easily understand, and see the beauty of. The joy of the human heart doth naturally discover itself by *mirth* and *singing*. Therefore, when the fields are filled with reapers, gleaners, industrious, and rejoicing husbandmen, the Psalmist, by an easy and beautiful figure, ascribeth the voice of joy and gladness to the very *earth*, that is the *cause* of it: and thus doth truly say, *that the hills and vallies themselves appear to laugh and sing*. I defy any
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one who hath the welfare of his neighbor and fellow-creature warm at heart; that hath the glory of the good God alive upon his soul, to enter the busy fields at this most joyful season, without secret rejoicing, and thanksgiving; without gratitude to God, and good-will to men. And even though he has no *immediate* self-interest in the scene to excite his mirth, yet he must receive pleasure at the *general* appearance of joy and blessings all around him.

Now if such an effect can be produced in those who only are *spectators* of this pleasing scene, what gratitude may we not expect to arise in the hearts of *them* who are *materially benefited* by these blessings of the Almighty: Whether this is truly the case, or not, must be decided by the inward feelings of your own hearts: I can only say it *ought* to be the case. And as it is my peculiar office, and bounden duty, to admonish you on *all* occasions, where your choicest welfare is at stake, permit me here, to make a few serious applications upon the general subject now before us.

And first, I would most affectionately exhort you, my dear brethren, to attend to this needful warning; which, to the frail nature of *some*, may be very profitable in guarding them from a most serious trespass against their Heavenly Benefactor, and consequently, against the peace of their own souls.

Beware then, my friends, lest at this plentiful season, when *the vallies* SHOULD *laugh and sing*, upon a principle of *grateful* joy on *your* part, and *labor* be rendered *easy*, by a chearful heart in them that *serve* you;

you; beware, I say, that no lurking spirit of *greediness*, that no want of *fellow-feeling*, interfere with this pleasing description of the *Psa'mist*. O! beware, lest instead of *joy*, and *gladness*, *sighing*, and *mourning* should enter into your fields! lest the disconsolate widow, or the needy children of the poor, should be deprived of the expected comforts that the overflowings of plenty doth *providentially* yield them at this *particular* season; and lest missing the gleanings of your *fruitful lands*, their sorrowful complaint should reach the ears of HIM, who pitieth the poor, and listeneth to the cry of the helpless, and oppressed. And particularly, at this time, I would recommend a merciful delay in turning your cattle into the fields too soon, before the poor have got the utmost benefit of *their accidental* harvest, lest there be *spoil* and *waste*, of what has ever been designed by the appointment of God's providence, for the occasional succour, and support of the *needy*; but let the poor, I say, have every *possible* advantage *first*, that their scanty circumstance requires, and the God of nature hath allotted them. You would do well to recollect also, that even under the late sore necessities of the multitude, *you* reaped an *occasional*, and *extraordinary profit*. I do not say, that any particular persons here present, were the *cause* of their wants, but *wherever* the cause originated, every *possessor* of grain, was *eventually benefited*. And this should afford *another* argument for every kind of *mercy* and *indulgence* towards your suffering brethren. For, pray let me ask, for whom do they toil? *for* whom do they waste their strength, and wear out all their lives?

lives? To whom are you indebted for the *preparation* of your lands, and for the *securing the produce* of them, but to the assistance of the *labourer*? Or if it pleases God at any time, to suffer such a *temporary* scarcity, as in the nature of things must be *most* severely felt by the *indigent*; who (in the name of common sense) can be so *much* bound by every principle of gratitude to God, and humanity to *man*, by every plea of *reason*, and *justice*, to relieve the distresses of the poor man, as they who *live*, who *prosper*, who often are *enriched* by the sweat of *their* brow? Depend upon it, my brethren, God permits such occasions to TRY us; to afford judgment against us out of *our own mouths*, if we continue hard-hearted to the afflicted, and ungrateful to *Him* for the numerous *undeserved* benefits we receive from his hands: and doubtless to reward us likewise, with the blessed expectation of *good and faithful servants*, if so we prove ourselves to be just stewards of his manifold gifts and graces. I do therefore most earnestly admonish you, my friends, to forbear the cruel, and wicked practice of depriving the poor of their right, by preferring the feeding your *cattle* to the feeding your *fellow-creatures*, lest you should draw down the judgment of heaven upon you for such unfeeling conduct. The benefit of *gleaning* to the poor, is a custom of as old a date, as any we read of, it has the sanction of *divine command*. Thus we read in Levit. xix. 9, 10. *When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not gather the gleanings of thy harvest*. Again, Deut. xxiv. 20 and 21. *When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt*
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not go over the boughs again; when thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And attend to the consequence of such liberal, merciful conduct, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands; therefore I command thee to do this thing. And it would help greatly to humble, and soften those who are unhappily otherwise disposed, to consider also, the reason God gives for their observance of this law, *Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence*; the application of which remembrance may be justly made to many in these times, to any whom God has raised from a low estate in life, and blessed their industry with success. They should remember, that some belonging to them, were once in the same humble state of necessity; and that as the same hand that raiseth, can bring down again, so they, or their posterity may in time be reduced to as slender circumstances again, as their poor neighbors; and therefore gratitude and mercy should go hand in hand to engage the loving-kindness of the Lord to continue his blessings to them. My second remark is this, my brethren, which I would with you likewise to attend to as another proper application of my subject. I believe it will not be denied by any one who has experience of what passes in his heart, who has made any serious observation how his mind is occasionally affected by the things of this world; but that the hour of success of any kind, and the moment of busy care, are seasons big with dangerous temptation, and more to be feared than a less prof-

prosperous condition; in short, too apt to wean him from considering the things that belong most to his peace. I mean to say, that the *one grand thing needful*, is not so *much* in our thoughts, when thus engaged, as it might, and *ought* to be; yet every Christian must confess, we should not have our affections thus wholly engrossed by worldly matters. The more the work of our hands is *blessed*, the readier we should be to look up to Him, that prospereth whatever diligence may be necessary and commendable, on *those days* that God hath kindly allotted for us, to labor in our callings. We should be very cautious, not to rob him of that service which he has particularly appointed for his own holy worship, and honor. We are as much bound by gratitude, to praise and serve him when all things go well with us, as we are to fear and beg forgiveness, when our affairs seem to wear a less thriving prospect. The Psalmist wisely admonishes us, *when riches increase not to set our hearts upon them*. We cannot be too wary, therefore, to ascribe the glory where alone it is due, and to let no worldly cares whatever, ensnare us from being mindful, that there is *another* harvest in store for us, of which this may be made a very lively, and useful *figure*.

Industry must on no account be discouraged among us; it is the duty of man not to be slothful in business. *In the sweat of his brow it was ordained that he should eat his bread*, after he was driven from the easy and happy state in which he was created, and placed at the beginning. Meat, and clothing,
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it is certain, must be procured; an honest return of rent must be attended to: families must be provided for; and if a little store can be obtained to help the days of age or sickness, it is a foresight by no means contradictory to Christian duty. All this, we know, requires care and labour; and depend upon it, God knew this as well as we, when he distinguished the days on which his creatures should *work*, and when a holy *rest* was necessary for them. We must never forget then (my brethren) that we have *another* calling besides this outward husbandry, the *soul* must be provided for, or (like the prodigal) we shall starve in the midst of plenty. We may be *troubled and careful about many things*, but we must take especial care, likewise, not to neglect *the one thing needful*: for though we have, in a *worldly* sense, many affairs to attend to, yet, in truth, we have but *ONE*, to which all the others should be subservient. We are sent into *this* world, merely to prepare for *another*; and if the grand business of our soul's health is minded, the others are all included in it. If that fail, or languishes, whatever success the others may *seem* to have, they will all *come to nothing*. God will not give a *final* blessing to our labours, if they have *not his glory* chiefly in view. They may thrive at *present*, according to the *natural course of things*, but judgment will overtake our *friends*, our *children*, or *ourselves*, if we are found to *labour only for the things that perish*. Be cautious, then (my brethren) not to divide your heart, and care, for *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*. Remember the sentence

tence against the covetous worldling: *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then, whose shall these things be?* Study to be able to say, what we must all say at the day of judgment, or it would have been better for us we had never been born; *I have finished the work which Thou, O Father, gavest me to do.* And herein appears the wisdom and goodness of our Heavenly Father, that he hath appointed unto every man his work. At the same time, therefore, that you are to consider the business which presents itself in the daily order of providence, as the work which God appoints you in this life; you must take especial care to apply yourselves to it in a manner worthy the grateful, and faithful servants of God. You must pray to him that it may not interfere with the necessary thoughts of his divine favour, lest you should be inclined to attribute too much to your *own merit*: but you must be continually thankful to *Him* who has rendered you both skilful, and able to work; and who has given a blessing on the calling at which he has placed you. Above all things, let it not tempt you to rob him of His stated worship, but rather rejoice at the *return* of that season, which affords you the happy leisure to think of a *future* state; to praise him for the blessings of the six days past; and to apply to him for further protection and success, in the week before you. Thus will all your most assiduous labours be converted into a religious service; you will happily obtain grace to serve God in the *field*, as well as in his *House*, AND YOUR END SHALL BE BLESSED. And to do

do this more effectually, accustom yourselves to inward prayer, and pious ejaculation. In the midst of the most plentiful crop; and even in the natural expedition to *secure* it: nothing will be hindered by such devout and humble thoughts as these. *How little do I deserve these blessings?*—In truth, *the earth is filled with the Goodness of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea!*—God give me a *grateful* heart, to confess his care over my affairs, and to make the suitable returns of a dependent creature.—Can I praise his holy name too much for the *health* and *strength* so needful to inspect my worldly business?—May God enlarge my heart to *others*, in proportion as he has prospered *me*.—May this success help to *soften*, instead of *hardening* my nature, and prevent my placing confidence in perishing riches.—May the wiles of the tempter have no power to seduce me in this busy time of trial.—May I never lose sight of this important truth: that I have need of *continual forgiveness* for my daily sins, and failings.—And may these good days, instead of slackening my endeavours for faith and grace through Jesus Christ, remind me of the principal duty of my life; and that I must so use all the mercies God vouchsafes me, as to make me meet for an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

By such useful checks as these (my friends) the business of this world, and *prudent care*, will not interfere with *religious caution*; but you will experience grace through the help of God's most Blessed Spirit, to qualify all your toil. While you hear

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your vallies laugh and sing, you will be able, with pious transport, to exclaim, Manifold and marvellous are thy works, O Lord; whether of nature, or of grace. Surely in wisdom, and loving kindness, hast Thou made them all. In every season the earth overfloweth with thy riches. May the harvest of the present time, continually remind and fit us for the more glorious harvest of eternal glory.

May this be the happy lot of all who hear me, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, &c. Amen.

SERMON XV.

FOR THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

PSALM lxxiv. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

They encourage themselves in mischief: and commune among themselves, how they may lay snares, and say, that no man shall see them. They imagine wickedness and practice it: that they keep secret among themselves, every man in the deep of his heart. But God shall suddenly shoot at them with a swift arrow: that they shall be wounded. Yea their own tongue shall make them fall: insomuch that whoso seeth them shall laugh them to scorn. And all men that see it shall say, this hath God done: for they shall perceive that it is his work.

I HAVE made choice of these words, my brethren, for my text, being a portion of the very suitable service appointed by our church, on the particular occasion of our meeting this day. They set before us a description of the method that wicked men take in general, to accomplish their secret villanies; and so exactly describe the abominable contrivance of the enemies of our church and state, in the times to which this anniversary refers us, that perhaps I could fix on no words in scripture

more applicable to the subject of what I purpose to deliver to you at this time.

The text opens, with pointing out to us, the manner in which the wicked *proceed* in their devices. They *encourage one another* in their evil designs; that is, they use all kind of arts to seduce, and bring others over to the commission of their purposed wickedness. *They commune with themselves, and say, that no man shall see them*; they consult so *deeply*, and are so close in their *plots*, that they promise themselves the *utmost security*. The text then continues to shew us, how vain is the support of all wickedness; and this is laid open in a very short, but complete discovery; *that God shall suddenly shoot at them with a swift arrow, that they shall be wounded*. All at once, in the most unexpected manner, and with the surest aim, their contrivances shall be disappointed, and their merited punishment follow. That eye which surveyeth all things at one view, shall prevent the mischief; and as to the *instrument*, that, which they of all others, least suspected, but (as in all God's operations) the most effectual, shall prove the cause of their destruction, for *even their own tongues shall make them fall*; which I shall more particularly make appear, in the short history of the event, that may be necessary to lay before you on this occasion. Lastly, *All men that see it shall say, this hath God done, for they shall perceive that it is his work*. When the knowledge of this conspiracy came to be made public, the inveteracy of the principles on which it was founded; the resolution and consequence of the several actors in it;

it; and the danger that attended any one that should disclose it; in short, the little probability of its being prevented, from the very secret measures that had been taken; and indeed from the little suspicion any one could entertain of so diabolical an invention, having entered into the design of men; all tended, to ascribe the deliverance to the HAND OF GOD; and that by the most gracious, and singular intervention. Every grateful person that escaped, was ready to exclaim, *This hath God done, for they plainly perceived that it was his work.* By this short, and easy paraphrase, or explanatory application of the principal portions of the text, you must readily observe, my brethren, how very pointed it is to the business of the day.

The general instruction to be derived from the celebration of particular times like these, is the magnifying the praise of God Almighty, and cultivating the seeds of religious gratitude in the hearts of Christians. As precedents, or authority for these national duties, we have abundant instances in the history of God's ancient people, who were strictly commanded, to celebrate the great deliverances they had received, by the most solemn acts of public worship, and due thanksgiving. Any one conversant with the Old Testament, must be so convinced of this, that it would be entirely superfluous to enumerate particulars. The *authority* of the proceeding, therefore, being indisputable from evidence of Holy Writ, it gives solemnity to the pious customs of our ancestors; it both evinces their sense of God's favor, and protection; and should

animate us, to acknowledge with equal gratitude, and sincerity, *that if the Lord himself had not been on our side, when such wicked men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick, when they were so wrathfully disposed against us.*

The end of all things, is the glory of God ; and it is the want of due attention to the innumerable mercies we have received, both public, and private, that we sink into that slumber of insensibility, which disgraces the character of dependant creatures ; that checks the growth of the religious principle which should distinguish us as *Christians*, and which, if encouraged, would at the same time that it magnified the undeserved favor of the Lord, prevent the visitation of his future judgment, denounced against ingratitude and disobedience. . To our shame, we must acknowledge, our general deportment is too often the reverse. However gracious the gifts, however important the deliverance from the danger, the proud, and careless mind of man disregards the Author of every blessing, and soon forgets the hand that made, and still preserves him.

The neglect, in many places, to preserve the remembrance of this remarkable circumstance of providential favour towards our government and nation, in the solemn manner which both Church and State have considerately provided, calls for *reformation*. All, who by their attendance on the service of the day, do testify a commendable respect to the pious ordinances of our established Church, and thereby discover a readiness to ex-

ercise

exercise a proper sense of God's *past* mercies to us, must feel that inward satisfaction, which every act of proper duty always yields; and in truth, by such obedience, we offer God our bounden thanks and praise for every national blessing we enjoy, by thus acknowledging the *former* preservation, which alone could have secured such great advantages.

And at *no* time, surely, could more attention deserve to be shewn to an anniversary of *this* kind, than in our own *immediate day*, when we have so recently experienced *fresh* mercy from above, by the marvelous escape of our present Sovereign from the wicked designs of his enemies, and the enemies of our Church, and State of course. Had the world, indeed, been happily so *reformed*, since the period of that dreadful plot (the deliverance from which we this day commemorate) that by the general purity of men's lives, the contrivance of such unequalled wickedness might almost pass for *fabulous*, there might be some plea for discontinuing the remembrance of it: But alas! do we not see that the very same barbarous spirit still dwells in human nature? The same rebellious disposition against God's laws, the same contempt in the minds of many, against those, whom by the appointment of his providence, he hath anointed as lawful rulers over his people. And, in short, the same mad desire prevails to introduce anarchy, and universal mischief and distress in the land; for the purpose of gratifying private prejudices, on the most destructive principles. The only *difference* that we may unhappily discover in the turbulent

and disaffected men of the *present* day, is, that they are actuated by interests of another complexion from that which instigated the *Popish* plot. The bigotry of a *false religion* inspired the cruel zeal of the conspirators of *those days*; the want of *all religion* is the characteristic of *modern innovators*, as the miseries of a neighbouring kingdom *fully prove*, and the woeful *consequence* will always be the *same*, whenever lawless power is permitted to obtain its wishes.

The nature of the *crime* remains the *same*, whether our King and rulers are destroyed by *gunpowder*, or assassinated any *other* way, and our preservation from the horrid *effects* of such a calamity does equally demand our gratitude to God, and abhorrence of the iniquitous attempt. As every religious person, therefore, knows that it is He alone who *snappeth the bow and breaketh the spear asunder*; and that it is under the divine protection we are shielded from every harm; it behoves us, more *particularly*, my brethren, at *this time*, to return our humble, and hearty thanks to our Almighty defender, for frustrating the designs of the wicked, against our lawful Sovereign, and saving us of course, from the manifold evils that must have followed so shocking an event. *Murder*, and misery in every shape, we see hath overwhelmed the land, where God hath suffered his fore-judgments to take place. Since regular government hath been destroyed, violence, oppression, and the worst of tyranny has succeeded. God will avenge the blood of the innocent, and doubtless in all these terrible convulsions, many of *that* description

fall

fall victims to the barbarity of their furious enemies. Surely, then, we cannot be too thankful for having as yet escaped these bitter sorrows; and with a due sense of such undeserved mercy towards us, I should have felt myself equally wanting in professional duty, if on so singular an occasion of celebrating God's praise for *former* deliverances, I had passed over so *similar* an attempt to involve the kingdom in distress, and so particular an instance of His repeated, and most gracious protection. *

From the spirit of these sentiments, my brethren, I am inclined to enter a little into the particular history of this extraordinary event, and that from two considerations :

(1.) For the information of any among you, who may be totally ignorant of the particulars of this plot : and (2.) by placing it in a *religious* point of view, to extol the prodigious goodness and power of the Most High ; and thereby render it (as was originally intended) a sacrifice of humble, grateful praise to our Divine Deliverer, and as a practical service to *lower* us in our own esteem ; to *strengthen* our dependance upon God for *all things*, by shewing the insufficiency of man, for safety, without his care ; and in short, to prove *that our help standeth in the Name of the Lord, who hath made Heaven and earth*.

* This addition was made in the year 1795, a few days after the King was thought to be *shot at*, as he was going to the parliament house, in his coach of state, and mercifully saved from any harm by the over-ruling power of Divine Providence. *Now know I, that the Lord preserveth his anointed.* Psal.

Lastly,

Lastly, I shall conclude with a Christian application of the whole subject, shewing in what temper we should receive every assault from the most cruel enemies, by attending to this salutary admonition, *That vengeance is the Lord's, and he will repay, in his own best time, and manner.*

(1.) The period when this very atrocious plot was laid, and happily frustrated, was in the reign of King James the first. The particular circumstances of those times, will afford us some account of what could possibly give rise to such a dark, and terrible conspiracy. You are to observe, that the unwarrantable power of the *Pope*, or Father of the church of Rome, over the church government of this country had but lately received its final blow, by the blessed establishment of our ecclesiastical affairs, under the protestant reign of Queen Elizabeth, King James's predecessor on the throne of these kingdoms. The many and dangerous errors, both doctrinal, and practical, that had crept into the church (called Roman catholic,) during a succession of ages from the first settling of Christianity rendered a *reformation* of that church most truly necessary, and desirable, in the eyes of all sensible, and strictly pious Christians. Through the means of an event that occasioned a great dispute between one of our former Kings *, and the Pope of Rome, the first step towards a protestant succession and religious reformation, was happily laid in this country. By abolishing the Pope's supremacy over our

* Henry the Eighth, Father of Queen Elizabeth.

church, and Princes, his power of course declined apace, and began to be disputed in other countries likewise; for about this time, the preaching, writings, and zealous industry of an active Priest* in Germany, greatly assisted the protestant cause in general, and our further deliverance from superstition, tyranny, and error. Thus, the Almighty, who can bring good out of evil, by instruments which, to shallow-sighted mortals, might appear inadequate to the end, was pleased to direct and lay the basis of our present degree of purity and freedom, both in church, and state. Instances innumerable, of blessings and improvements, both to individuals, and whole kingdoms, might be traced to causes very trifling in themselves, or *seemingly*, not even corresponding with any *pious* effects. We must be cautious, therefore, not to be over partial to any proceeding which is in itself manifestly allied to evil, because the Lord permitted it *ultimately* to produce a *general* benefit, but all such *extraordinary consequences* should teach us, to magnify his power, and wisdom, who can over-rule the blindness of the wicked, to produce such works as oblige mankind to wonder. For instance, in the first grand reformation, in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, though the basest ingratitude, cruelty, and perverseness, were instrumental to the highest act of mercy which earth and Heaven will join to celebrate to all eternity; still we must ever hold in abhorrence, the flagitious conduct of the actors who

* Martin Luther.

had no designs to answer but their own evil inclinations.

But to our subject. You need hardly be told, that selfish, and wicked characters compose a considerable portion of the community in all nations. In every revolution and alteration of worldly systems, vast numbers of *interested* persons will be found in opposition to the *fairest* side. Again; prejudice of education, uniting with these principles, cannot be expected to be immediately subdued, and as many of these prejudices were inherited by numbers that were otherwise well-meaning men, and possessed of wealth, and popular influence, *parties* were naturally formed in various quarters of the kingdom, which carried proportionate weight in their decision. But above all, in consequence of the extreme ignorance of the people at large, the habit of *error* had thrown a power into the hands of the Romish clergy of those days, which rendered them *very formidable*. These being dispossessed of their profitable, and easy posts, and urged by the united influence of pride, prejudice, and *self-interest*, no wonder that they were inclined to oppose a spirit of *reformation*, which so manifestly threatened the downfall of their *power*. They therefore *began to make no small stir about that way*, for by the false and captivating allurements of their art, *they brought no small gain unto themselves*. On all occasions, therefore, they assembled the advocates of the former superstition, and like Demetrius of old, arguing *that by this craft ye know we have our wealth*; they proceeded to resist the protestant cause, with all the artifice

artifice that deluded, and unprincipled minds could fabricate.

To a conspiracy of such disappointed, and furious male-content, we owe the history of the *Powder Plot*; a plan so deeply mischievous, and cruel in its design, that all history, cannot afford one exceeding it in devilish contrivance. It was by a secret storage of a great quantity of that destructive composition Gunpowder, that the enemies of our church and state, intended to blow up the three composite parts of government; King, Lords, and Commons, when fully assembled on the business of the nation. And had not the eye of Heaven been watchful over that Reformation, its Providence so wonderfully directed; had not the arm of Omnipotence interfered to shelter the friends of liberty, and sound religion; the accomplishment of such a plot would doubtless have given a wound not readily healed, and made way for the usurpation of that power, and the exercise of that influence, which the goodness of God towards us as a nation, thought proper in time to abolish, in order to make way for his purer service, and the happiness of his people.

But we do not meet here, my brethren, to revile, arraign, and reproach our enemies, or to renew any odious enquiries as to the particular agents in the iniquity; let their sins, and the memory of them, perish together, further than they afford due matter of pious gratitude for our escape; and the means of establishing in our hearts, this never-failing truth, *That while we put our trust in God, we need not fear*
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what man can do unto us. This leads me to an occasional remark, which may be worthy your attention in continuation of the little sketch I have afforded you of this transaction, and indeed, to which this pertinent observation of the Psalmist so obviously directs, in these remarkable words, *That into the same snare which they bid privily, the ungodly (in one sense) fell themselves*; so certain is it *That when the Lord doth execute judgment, the ungodly is trapped in the work of his own hands*: for it is a fact very memorable in the issue of this dreadful business, that a number of the conspirators, who had been preparing an intended insurrection of the people, to *second* the mine that was constructed at Westminster, when they found their plot *discovered*, fled different ways to assemble those friends they hoped would rise in their defence. These wretched men, being at last compelled, to the number of about one hundred, to stop at a house in Warwickshire, where they were resolved to make a *desperate stand*, a spark of fire happening to fall upon some gunpowder, that was laid to dry, it accidentally blew up, and so maimed the principal conspirators, that the remainder were obliged to open the doors, and make the best escape they could. By this strange accident, they were punished in the VERY MANNER they had barbarously projected against their *King*, and *Countrymen*, and at the same time, by this providential interference much innocent bloodshed was prevented of those opposing them, since we may well suppose, they would have sold their lives as dear as possible.

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The text presents us with *another* observation no less deserving notice. In the punishment of the wicked it is said, *their own tongue shall make them fall*, and this alludes particularly to the surprizing *method* of the *discovery*.

What a blessed principle, my brethren, is it to encourage a belief, that God is above the Devil in all things; and that out of every disaster, private, or public, he can, and *will* deliver them who are engaged in the good work of forwarding his glory. Among the vast variety of secondary causes that God employs in his government of temporal events; perhaps there are none more curious, than that which led to the prevention of the shocking massacre intended to have been perpetrated as above described. It is truly singular, in this extraordinary case, how powerful virtue is in its *effect* (where only *one particle* of the genuine principle remains), to triumph over all the treacherous, and prevailing interests of *vice*. The account I am about to mention, is registered in all our histories.

One of the traitors, a man of high birth, being willing to save the life of a nobleman, very dear to him, conveyed a letter to him in an unknown hand, a few days previous to the sitting of parliament. The letter was written in very mysterious terms, and intreated him, as he valued his *life*, to stay away from the ENSUING PARLIAMENT. In consequence of this event, suspicions, and enquiries, were soon abroad; but nothing satisfactory could be decided. At length the penetration of the *King himself*, determined him to conclude, from
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the singular wording of the letter, that some sudden danger was preparing, through the means of *gunpowder*.

It was only the *very night before* the meeting of Parliament, that orders were sent to examine the vaults, on which the house is built; when a train was found leading to thirty-six barrels of powder; and one Fawkes discovered in disguise, and preparing to execute the infernal project, in which himself inevitably must have perished. So far then, we may truly say in the words of the text, *yea their own tongues shall make them fall*.

But the tender mercies of the Lord are no less marvellous, than his power; *his goodness endureth continually: when he beginneth he maketh an end*, and well doth it behove us to utter the memory of his goodness; not only by celebrating his Holy Name for this mighty deliverance of our former governors and protestant forefathers, but also for providing for the *continuance* of these inestimable benefits to us, the happy posterity of his rescued servants. For by a singular direction of Divine Providence, and at a time when mischief in plots of different shapes, were levelled at the religion and government of our country, we are presented with a *fresh deliverance*; with a circumstance of *double joy*, and praise: it being in this same month, and on the day also, that the Prince of Orange, afterwards King William the Third, landed with his army to defend us against the designs of both *intestine*, and *foreign* foes, to the protestant cause, and British constitution,

James

James the Second was the grandson of that King who owed his safety to that wonderful Providence of God which we this day commemorate. In consequence of the troubles of his father's reign*, he was from his infancy exposed to foreign education. He had been bred a papist, and was strongly bigotted to the principles of the Romish Church. The friends of despotic government, as enemies of the reformation, encouraged his disposition to arbitrary power, and his design of changing the established religion of the land. Such attempts as these were truly alarming to Protestants, and Englishmen. In this extremity of danger, the goodness of Almighty God directed the councils of our ancestors to apply to the Prince just mentioned (who had married the eldest daughter of the King), as champion of their rights; his success is well known, as being still happily felt by us. Under the gracious protection of the Almighty, he settled the troubles of the nation, by defending the interests of Church and State; he provided for the succession of the crown, in the protestant line, and in the illustrious family which now fills the throne. With strict propriety then, and bounden gratitude, may we celebrate this *second* interference of Divine Favor, and it behoves us to exalt our sacrifice of pious praise, by considering what we now enjoy, in consequence of this event, as well as what we *might* have been, had God withheld the shield of his defence. Instead of

* King Charles the First.

a free and prosperous people,—instead of a pure religion, and decent form of worship,—we might have been the impoverished subjects of injurious power, or the slaves of foreign despots. The night of error and superstition would have again invaded our spiritual dawn, and the extravagant fopperies of artifice and delusion, would have deprived us of that substantial hope, which a rational and enlightened worship presents to the very lowest of Christ's faithful servants.

The memory of such a valuable instrument of good may therefore justly be called **GLORIOUS**, both from his interference, and intrepidity in rescuing us from the yoke of foreign power, and **IMMORTAL** likewise, we charitably trust it will be found, in proportion to the purity of the motive that urged this valiant Prince to risk his person, and encounter various conflicts, in order to effect the blessings we enjoy.

With a view of injuring the interests of religion, men of a licentious mind and unfair reasoning, are ready to object that every material revolution originates in the mistakes of *pious zeal*: a candid review of the most memorable changes in our own affairs will easily refute this charge. No one hardly will deny that *Fawkes* and *Cromwell*, were equally divested of every particle of *pure religion*. Each of them put on the masks of furious zeal to cover the impulse of malice, and ambition. Principles of a very different cast induced them to pursue their favourite designs, by the aid of the prevailing opposition that marked the interests of their party.

party. And for the honor of *genuine* religion, we may defy the bitterest enemy of its cause, to shew *one instance*, where persecution, or oppression, were instigated by a chief, whose private character was *eminent*, or *exemplary* for CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

To conclude, with a short application of what has been said to you upon this occasion. In every visitation or deliverance we receive, whether as individuals, or members of the community at large, it is the part of truly humble and experienced Christians, to resolve the event into the wisdom and mercy of God. The example of our suffering master admonishes us not to bear hard even upon our *enemies*, but to *forgive*, and *pray for them*. It is enough that we are rescued from their *snare*s. To him be the glory of our *escape*, and the recompence of their animosity.

And though it may be wise and proper, to guard against encroachments upon those stated boundaries, which are provided for the general safety of established rights, and privileges; yet we must be very cautious, to avoid that spirit, which has occasionally marked the conduct of our *enemies* in former times.

Neither the advantages of our present education, and our *better light*, can warrant us to insult or injure any description of our fellow-subjects who happen to differ from us in matters of spiritual concern; on the contrary, our emerging from bigotry should teach a purer conduct; and though we have *numbers* on our side; this will by no means justify our injuring their *property*, endangering their *lives*,

or destroying their *habitations*, upon every partial surmise of preference of opinion, that misgrounded fear of their disaffection, or restless, artful, and seditious minds may propagate; and much less, in consequence of our superiority in power. Thank heaven, the ancient prejudices which gave birth to the turbulent commotions of the times, to which this anniversary alludes, have long worn off. The existence of an idle, opulent, and dangerous description of priests,* has been for some time past acknowledged, not only *useless*, but even *injurious* to the peace of nations, by all enlightened and sensible Roman catholics themselves. Whether this once powerful body of men, could possibly be actuated by the pure principles of christian faith, while so generally engrossed by *political intrigue*, and devoted to *ambition*, requires but little consideration to determine. Still, we are not justifiable in confounding the virtuous exertions of any people, with the errors and misconduct that may have marked some *particular orders* among them. We must not deny, nor can we forget, without considerable ingratitude, that our universities, our churches, and principal foundations of piety, and learning, are largely indebted to the generous endowments, and religious zeal, of those judicious benefactors, who though they lived under a church government of less evangelical constitution, than that we *now* enjoy, yet had they evidently the universal welfare of the church of Christ at heart, or they would never

* The Jesuits.

have projected such valuable and permanent provision for its ministry.

Happily those jealousies, which so frequently interfered to disturb the harmony of fellow-subjects, on the principles now mentioned, have long since subsided: men are generally convinced, that a foreign power can have no more reasonable claim to govern this realm, than *our* Princes have to decide upon the affairs of *Rome*. The invaluable protection afforded by our excellent laws, to *liberty of conscience*, and *security of property*, has made faithful subjects of all denominations on principles of soundest wisdom; and allowing for the influence of *education*, and the inherent sentiments of *particular families*, we no longer reflect upon our fellow-citizens for serving God, as they have been taught, but unite as christian, and loyal countrymen, in one common cause, to preserve the general freedom, and defend the pillars of our constitution. By this firm league, though innovation may attempt *occasional* attacks, it soon evaporates (under providential guardianship) in the unnoticed zeal of inconsiderate individuals; who while they venture upon no *infringement* of the *civil power*, are suffered to enjoy their favorite sentiments in peace.

And here I should dismiss you, but that the particular occasion of our meeting, and the alarming ferment of public affairs now agitating a neighbouring nation, seem to require a few short remarks respecting such horrible commotions. In a *political* sense, we may justly apply the Psalmist's language to those very serious troubles, *that the*

foundations of the earth seem out of course. This marvellous revolution is conducted by a party, that far from assuming the cloke of *pious zeal*, to cover their temporal pursuits (as is often objected when disorders of this kind take place) they most boldly and profanely contemn *all holy influence whatever*; deride in general the interference of Divine protection; and reprobate the value of *all religious institutions*, and Christian ordinances. They presumptuously defend the conceits of their own vain hearts, by the mere power of their *mortal arm*, and in defiance of all prudence, human, and divine, would erect a system of their *own* throughout the world, on principles which, in the nature of things, can neither be prosperous, or durable.

The use, my brethren, that we should make of all such violent commotions, is to reflect how far the hand of Heaven may be discerned, in these heavy visitations. To attend how *near* we are approaching to the *manners* of these suffering people, in *levity, licentiousness, abuse* of God's most solemn appointments (especially his Holy Sabbath), and above all, our foul ingratitude towards our heavenly Benefactor, for the very many mercies we have received, and the extraordinary blessings we still enjoy. To be content with our present happy form of government; to promote peace, and unity among each other; and individually and speedily, to begin a reformation of those darling sins which *do most easily beset us*; lest finally, we contribute to provoke the vengeance of the Lord to overtake us, as in his wise decrees, we see it daily does

does all those, who abuse his goodness, and dispute his power. Let us beware also, not uncharitably to fix the burthen of his wrath to any *particular persons*, or to determine such awful events by the measures of our own blind reasoning; but patiently to wait the issue, under due assurance, that God will overrule the wickedness of men for some good end, to those who fear him; and to the eternal glory of his own great name. In the mean time, let us incessantly put up our humble and earnest prayers to God, (on principles of Christian and fellow feeling) that He will be pleased to spare his creatures to REPENTANCE, for the sake of those *who have not yet bowed down to Baal*, and in his good time, *to give unity, peace, and concord to all nations.*

To conclude;—As to *religion*, I believe it may be truly said, a safer and less exceptionable mode of serving God, and glorifying our Redeemer does not exist in any Christian state than that we profess. It behoves us, therefore, to use it for the *end* it was vouchsafed to us, and while we forbear to hazard any encroachments that may endanger its foundation, let us beware of yielding to *intemperate zeal* in opposing those who are not partial to its forms; confiding in the sound construction of the fabric, and nothing doubting, but that when reason shall be sated with the unprofitable flights of fancy, and in proportion as men have wisdom to make the plain word of God their *general rule*, such efforts, as violent opposition may inflame to frenzy, will naturally subside by moderate treatment. In short,

my friends, we should own *no enemies* but the *fact of Christ*, our Blessed Lord and Savior; and even for those who, blinded by the proud conceits of a wild philosophy, do obstinately reject the positive revelation of his glorious word, we should daily and fervently petition, that their eyes may be opened *to see the light*; and their hearts touched with a grateful sense of the fundamental principles of the Gospel; Christ the power and wisdom of God; God incarnate atoning for the general depravity of human nature; and purchasing a power to restore us to the inheritance of the children of his Heavenly Father. In truth, the above description of men are the most dangerous enemies of both Church and State, because they strike at the root of all grace and obedience. From christian charity to their own souls, and the eternal interests of those over whom they have any influence, they cannot be too much discouraged and exposed, by men of piety and learning, in respect to the general evil tendency of their opinions. But still, as common subjects of the realm, they are intitled to all the blessings of its *laws*, though they daily madly, and ungratefully persist in undervaluing the constitution. Their worldly property also, is as sacred as their *lives*, nor can any unhappy bias of their deluded minds, afford one particle of just pretence for injuring their *goods*, their *persons*, or *estates*. On this pure principle of Christian amity, may we all have grace to perceive our respective duties towards our King, our governors, and our fellow-subjects, and may we so pass through this life

life in peace, mutual forbearance and good-will, that finally, we may meet in the regions of everlasting peace and joy through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life and Glory. To whom, &c.

SERMON XVI.
FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

LUKE ii. 11.

For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

THE history of this blessed event, as here related by the Evangelist, is an exact fulfilling of the prophecy of Isaiah, who thus describes the birth, and kingdom of Christ, with the overflowing joy that shall be to all people on this glorious occasion. *For unto us (saith he) a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful-Counsellor—The Mighty God—The Everlasting Father—The Prince of Peace—*These lofty words, are part of the first lesson appointed for the particular service of this happy day. To set forth the riches of their contents, will furnish abundant, and joyful matter for your present instruction.

If it is a natural impulse to express our *joy when a man is born into the world*; if it hath been a custom to record and celebrate the day that reminds us of the power and favor of God in suffering an image of *ourselves* to be transmitted to posterity!
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How much more incumbent is it on us, to honor the anniversary of the birth of the mighty representative and deliverer of the human race! To shew ourselves exceeding glad at an event, which *brought tidings of great joy unto all nations*. Well may we exult in the language of the royal Psalmist, and say, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes: This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

The method I shall take, for your spiritual improvement at this time, my brethren, will be to endeavour, with God's help, to convince you of the blessing conferred upon us, in the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and that I may the better prepare your mind for receiving the important truths suggested by this pleasing subject, I shall present it to you, in three points of view.

First; as it leads us to examine the surprising prophecies which *preceded* this wonderful event.

Secondly; as it engages the attention to consider the valuable *benefits* derived to the world from Christ's being born in it; and,

Thirdly; I shall make such an application of the whole subject to our immediate conduct, which I trust, through your prayers to God, to enable you to act consistently on *all* solemn days and times, will contribute to render you truly sensible in what manner it concerns every real christian to observe *this day*, and season in *particular*.

(1.) The most remarkable prophecies relating to the promise of the coming of Christ are these:—We read in the viith and xivth chapters of Isaiah, that
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God sent his servant to King Ahaz in order to comfort him in the extremity of his fears of being invaded, and spoiled by his enemies; and the token which he gave, that they should not prevail against his people, was expressed in these words: *Therefore the Lord himself, shall give you a sign; Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* This prediction agrees exactly with the following, recorded by Jeremiah, in chap. xxxi. ver. 22. *The Lord hath created a new thing on the earth, a woman shall compass a man.* That is, God shall produce a new creation of a man; and it shall be most truly a creation, because it is to be wrought in one sex, without the other; and the accomplishment of the same is fully expressed in Luke i. 35. When a natural doubt presented itself to the highly favoured party, concerning such a miracle, an angel of the Lord was sent to unfold the manner of the circumstance. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy one which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* And agreeable to this declaration by the angel, the original word Immanuel, under which title the Messiah was promised, is interpreted, *God with us.*

Further; the prophet Micah, ch. v. ver. 2. expressly foretold the very place of Christ's nativity, in these remarkable words: *But thou, Bethlehem Ephrath, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, who is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting,* that is, who was pre-ordained to
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the office of Messiah, before the worlds were made; who in the wise and gracious decrees of the Most High, was to take our nature upon him, and to suffer, and triumph in it over death, sin, and Satan.

From these extraordinary predictions, we see that the *expectation* of God's Holy anointed Son, was held out to the world very long before his being born in it; and herein the Wisdom of our Heavenly Father doth eminently shine: for as this Divine Person was in the same unerring design, to figure in a *low* and despised condition, in point of *worldly* consequence, God thereby discovers the insignificancy of all temporal grandeur in *his sight*, and the much more illustrious honours by which he chose to distinguish Him who was to be the highest that was born of woman. To this end, humble as the birth of our Lord appeared, both in regard to outward circumstances, and earthly parentage, yet we find it was thought worthy of being announced by an embassy of angels from on high; and that even a sign was appointed in the heavens to lead to the spot of his nativity. There, both the great and small ones of the earth were summoned to repair, and pay that homage which his Holy Name, and future office called for, even in this infant state of his appearing. Thus we read in the second lesson of this morning service, Luke ii. 9. *That as the shepherds were keeping watch over the flocks, by night, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them.* And as they were naturally surprised and terrified at such
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an unusual vision, to dispel their fears, the angels then accosted them in these most cheering words, which go before the text : *Behold we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people : for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.*

And lest they should be disappointed in finding one so different in point of *outward* situation, from what might be expected upon so singular and glorious a manner of his being manifested, they gave them the further particular token recorded in the lesson of the day, by which they might be certain of the truth of what was told them, confirming the value of their blessed message, by praising God in that devout and solemn hymn, transmitted to us in the 14th verse—*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.* Further; even the wise and wealthy among the Gentiles, were likewise fore-warned to visit and worship the Holy Child Jesus, and join in those honours which the Almighty had ordained should be shewn his Son. The particulars of the journey which the wise men of the East were encouraged to undertake to this purpose, with their holy zeal in obeying the heavenly sign, afforded for their direction to the place of Christ's nativity, is fully related in the second of St. Matthew.

Here then, my brethren, we have the highest authority from the spirit of prophecy, concerning this event, as also by the marvellous signs and their effects, upon both Jews and Gentiles, to pay becoming honours to this blessed season. Justly may

we adopt the language of the Psalmist, in the gladness of our hearts, and say, *When I remember these things I pour out my spirit within me ; I went with the multitude to the house of God with the voice of joy, and praise, with them that keep holy day.* Highly doth it behove us to employ every possible means of true thanksgiving, especially when we reflect upon the precious benefits derived unto us from Christ's appearance in our nature. This was the second article I purposed to advance for your serious and grateful consideration at this time.

As I am now addressing many, who notwithstanding all the advantages afforded them under a pure, and christian establishment, it is to be feared, are yet lamentably ignorant of the most common information upon the subject of sacred history : and though this season has so often returned within their knowledge, yet from ignorance and disinclination united, they are apt to pass it over, as a time of mere annual festivity, and sensual enjoyment ; I will, therefore, just intimate to such, in the plainest manner, the literal meaning of the title by which this season is distinguished, before I proceed to the more material enquiries into its spiritual and serious consequence. This, I am sensible, may appear superfluous to *some*, but in an assembly, where want of early education is so common, it may have its use with those desirous to be instructed. The word CHRISTMAS is formed of that particular name belonging to our Blessed Lord, which signifies *anointed* (and answers to the Hebrew word *Messiah*) and in its united, and general

ral sense, with the word *mass* added to it, implies the service of the church performed in honour of Christ's birth. The word *mass apart*, was a term employed in early times to express the whole of the common prayer; or public worship, at *any holy season*. By the *incarnation* or *nativity* of Christ, we understand the coming of the Messiah in human nature; and if we allow the mind to *dwell* upon this wondrous deed, it will raise such a store of pious, and affecting thoughts, as will help our growth in spiritual concerns, and prevent indifference, or dishonour to the season.

We will now proceed, to weigh the principal advantages of our Saviour's birth, even under the seemingly discouraging *manner* of it. The Apostle assigns a very important, and satisfactory reason for the meanness and obscurity of Christ's appearance in the world. 2 Cor. viii. 9. *Though he was rich, saith he, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his POVERTY might be made rich.* Herein he displayed the most astonishing *condescension*, and *love*. By this humiliation, he comforteth the *poor*, who compose the greater portion of society, and warneth the *rich*, who are too apt to be ensnared by temporal prosperity. The former are taught to look up to *Him* (under every extremity of indigence, neglect; or persecution,) whose wisdom preferred *that* state, which Providence has ordered for *their* peculiar lot. They are encouraged to build hope, under the severest visitations, when they contemplate *his* sufferings, *who though the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his*

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Person, was content to be made a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, to be despised and rejected of his brethren. And when they further reflect, that to the poor the Gospel was preached; and that the Divine Author of it, was pleased to call such his friends, who patiently endured to the end; surely the humble Christian may reap great consolation, under the worst of circumstances; especially when he recalls the choice his gracious Master made, and that on purpose to secure the truest riches to his followers. This will lead him rather to prize his station than be dissatisfied with it: he will rejoice in being such, as Christ judged proper to be found; and setting loose to all the charms of worldly glory, instead of coveting, he will rather dread the infectious baits, with which the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are continually tempting the unwary and worldly-minded.

On the other hand, the wealthy, the prosperous, and the powerful, receive a valuable lesson from the humble, self-denying deportment of the man Christ Jesus, not to be puffed up by worldly fortune, not to set their affections upon uncertain riches; since He who was Lord of all things, who made the world, and knew the safest road to un fading happiness, was pleased to forego the indulgence of what He might most easily have obtained; of what he certainly would never have abused; and because his whole life and conversation discountenances such attachments. As to those, to whom, by the appointment of the supreme Director, the hazardous portion of affluence was intrusted, He kindly and earnestly

earnestly exhorts *them*, to make to *themselves* friends of the *Mammon of unrighteousness*, and that, on principles of grateful duty, and impartial mercy, lest in this life only, they should find themselves rewarded.

Both rich, and poor, then, may rest assured, that the narrowness of our Savior's outward circumstances, was founded in that unerring will, which regulates all the purposes of heaven; as being conducive to the greatest glory of the Creator, and the most perfect benefit of the creature. They are thereby led to one and the same grand object of the Christian life, the cultivation of HUMILITY. They may equally perceive the absolute necessity of this from the divine pattern, set before them, by the Lord of life and glory. They are thereby induced to strive after the precious riches of every true disciple of the Redeemer. And what are they? *To know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was by poverty or lowliness, both in the actual, and spiritual sense of the word, that Christ obtained this grace for mortals. *Through sufferings be advanced to glory*, and it is by renouncing ourselves, and the world, to a certain degree of evangelical forbearance, that we can assure ourselves of having any share or knowledge of this grace.

Such being the blessing designed us by our dear Lord's humiliation, and which furnishes the true wedding garment, it is very expedient, that from time to time, we should examine ourselves most diligently upon this subject. Ask your own hearts, my brethren, Is this *your happy case*? Are you in

any good measure able to make the Apostle's confession, *That ye are crucified to the world and the world to you?* If not, pray and strive, that it may be so; for where shall any of us stand at the last day, if we have *not*, in a valuable degree, repented of our sins, and subdued the rebellion that is in the flesh through lust, or evil desires? and thereby advanced to a state of preparation for pardon and acceptance, into the realms of light, through the blood of Him, *who cleanseth from all sin?* Let us labour then to be *poor in spirit*, but *rich in grace*, that instead of coveting earthly splendor, ours may be the kingdom of heaven. Surely, this is an inestimable species of property, by which we obtain redemption, *even the forgiveness of our sins*; and such is the riches of Christ's grace, *for by Him all who believe are justified or cleansed from all things*. The original impurity of their fallen nature is washed away through his blood; the actual sins they have committed, and truly repented, and forsaken, are no more to be remembered against them.

Poor, as to Christian attainments, we are all by nature: to supply this riches seems our truest wisdom; to have Christ formed in us, a hope of glory, should be the Christian's boast; to disclaim all merit of our own is the way to taste that favor. Then, (as the Apostle speaks,) we shall say, *yet not I, but Christ, or the grace of God within me*. But the pride of man cannot easily digest this doctrine. It does not meet salvation willingly, in the way that Christ proposes it, *The carnal mind is enmity with God*. Nevertheless the truth and necessity of St. Paul's

confession is evident, on the plainest principles of reason. The case stands thus: That Christ must have an influence on the human heart, before it can be fitted for presentation to the Father of lights, or in other words, that we must feel the expediency of having an interest in our Savior's merits, proposes nothing wonderful or difficult to credit, when once we are brought to a due sense of our weakness, and baseness, without God's help.

But what can a depraved creature possibly perform essentially pleasing to an all-perfect Being, without He graciously renews a disposition and power to do good, and so far renders him partaker of a *better* nature? This is no more than you will find continually repeated in the revelation of God's dealing with his creatures, in various points of view; and heavy will be the condemnation of those, who can *read* that word, who may often *bear* it, and yet neglect so valuable a study; such glorious opportunity of being converted to the truth. The short of the matter is this; Christ (saith the Apostle) is *made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*; that is, in a fuller interpretation of the text, We are born again of God through virtue of Christ's atonement, and if distrusting the value of our own strength, we rely entirely on the merits of that sacrifice, we shall find assistance from above, to enlighten us to discern the true *wisdom*; this will lead us onto righteous actions; God will further help us by his good Spirit, as he has promised to his Son, that we may become holy in all manner of conversation; and by exercising these joint aids, we shall,

any good measure able to make the Apostle's confession, *That ye are crucified to the world and the world to you?* If not, pray and strive, that it may be so; for where shall any of us stand at the last day, if we have not, in a valuable degree, repented of our sins, and subdued the rebellion that is in the flesh through lust, or evil desires? and thereby advanced to a state of preparation for pardon and acceptance, into the realms of light, through the blood of Him, *who cleanseth from all sin?* Let us labour then to be *poor in spirit*, but *rich in grace*, that instead of coveting earthly splendor, ours may be the kingdom of heaven. Surely, this is an invaluable species of property, by which we obtain redemption, *even the forgiveness of our sins*; and is the riches of Christ's grace, for by it *we believe are justified or cleansed from all things* through his blood; the actual sin committed, and truly repented, and more to be remembered against

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no preference as to the peculiar structure of the edifice, whether the delegated founder of their respective church, or congregation, was Paul, or Peter, or any other sound disciple. So they have been raised upon a sure foundation; *all is theirs.* (1.) The *World*, that is, every thing around us is intended to contribute to their spiritual improvement. This *Life* is given them as a state of *probation*, to train them in the inscrutable designs of providence, for endless happiness. (2.) Even *Death*, which was at first a *curse* for sin, becomes, through the healing efficacy of the Sun of righteousness, the immediate entrance into heavenly rest; the gate of life; the morning of an unfading birth. For where God and Christ reign in holy, and mysterious union, with the Spirit of peace and joy, there can be neither night nor darkness, pain nor sorrow, but a perpetual communication of light, and love, and praise, in meditating the infinite mercy of redemption.

(3.) But it is time we should conclude. Let us therefore seriously apply what has been said to our immediate conduct. That we may not dishonor this blessed season, and disgrace our Christian name, let us consider that we are only creatures of a day; that *in the midst of life we are in death*. It has pleased the Author, and preserver of our existence, to permit us once more to celebrate together this joyful festival; we may never enjoy the opportunity of *another* meeting on this occasion. Let us beware not to provoke Him, by any ungracious or perverse deportment, to shorten our time of trial. To guard

us from offending in this respect, it may be of general service to reconsider the character of Him *who came to visit us in this our mortal life, in great humility, that when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both quick and dead, we may be found of that happy number, who shall rise to the life immortal.* With this view, I have set before you the lowly, and afflicted state of our Blessed Savior, as contributing to the *price* of our recovery, and the possession of our spiritual riches. I have also introduced him in his original, and *exalted* character, as the **ETERNAL WORD**, by which his glorious work is qualified, and rendered effectual to endless ages. By thus combining the virtue of his *sacrifice*, and *authority*, we establish the ground of our future hope: and by meditating alternately upon his *mercy*, and *omnipotence*, we shall be defended from committing any trespass that might border on *ingratitude*, *impiety*, or *presumption*. When we behold this glorious person bleeding for our sake; when we look upon *Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, (in saving the world from punishment) endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* When we consider that spotless Lamb who submitted to such contradiction of sinners against himself, who, though Lord of all things, became poor, that we through his poverty might inherit endless riches, every tender affection, every grateful sentiment, every dutiful exertion, must actuate the Christian breast. But when we reflect upon the *higher nature*, and the dignified description bestowed upon

upon him by the Prophet, That this *child* whose birth we now commemorate; this *Son* who was devoted for our transgressions, was *the wonderful, or secret, Word himself*; coequal with the Father; *The Counsellor, Agent or Designer* of all created nature in heaven and earth; nay, the *Mighty God*, who in his own person declared his union with the *Everlasting Father*; and by his mediatorial office, most truly was the *Prince of Peace*. In short, when we are told, that God was *in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them*. Surely, it calls for more than generous feeling; it excites our *wonder, praise, and adoration*; it exceeds our present limited powers, to express, or to conceive such infinite love, and what angels wish to look into, but cannot comprehend, leaves us no other part to act, but to prostrate ourselves to the earth, and worship in deep humility, *such great salvation*.

While, then, we so frequently do honor to the birth of sinful dust and ashes like ourselves; of man, that is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards; while we are apt to make such splendid preparations to welcome many into the world, concerning whom, we know not but that finally, it might have been better for them had they never been born; would it become us to slacken in our joy for *Christ's* nativity? Who was born and persecuted; who died and rose again, for our deliverance; how great then, must be the impiety and ingratitude of those, who profane the anniversary of his incarnation?

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After what has been said, I think none can remain so ignorant, or so stupid, as not to discern the heinous wickedness of abusing this holy day, and season. That it is a time of *rejoicing*, is most true, but of a very different kind, from that which many practise. It calls for sober and *religious* joy, not riotous, and dissolute mirth. Our Blessed Master put on our nature, on purpose to prescribe *humility*, and afford us the only means of lowering the carnal appetites, and passions. Instead of this, it is too common a custom, to make express provision *to fulfil the lusts of the flesh*; and to study nothing so much at this particular season, as sensual gratifications.—*A monstrous perversion of his design!* Too many, alas! it is to be feared, *far* from preparing their minds for hearing and digesting the instruction afforded them this day, are early and busy in stupifying their understandings, by which they in a manner *crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*. His infinite goodness truly, inclined him to pray even for them who were his murderers; but then we are to observe, it was, *because they knew not what they did*. But this is not *your* case, you know both the sin and foul ingratitude, of dishonoring the Lord who bought you; nor can any one who wilfully doth this, expect in reason that Christ will intercede for *them*. Our Lord's nativity, indeed, supplies abundant matter for our *warmest transport*, but we cannot be too careful to accommodate the *manner* to the *subject* of our joy. In those, who have the means of hospitable exer-

exertions, it certainly is a duty, and very commendable, to afford that comfort to their needy brethren, which straitened circumstances deny the power of procuring. The very season of the year, expressly calls for tender, and considerate notice of the *poor*. This, like the wise men's gift, is offering of the best we have unto the Lord, in memory of his mercies to ourselves. But even *this* should be attended to, with pious judgment; not to make beasts of those *for whom Christ died*, but to fill their hearts with grateful praise to *Him*, who only gives the disposition of doing genuine good. On the contrary, all who pervert their liberality, by favoring any irregularity of manners, or by gratifying the disorderly inclinations of those dependant on their bounty, all such, are still more blameable than the ignorant and thoughtless objects of the excess; since without the *means* they could not trespass in this particular. I humbly trust, through God's blessing on the endeavor, that these few plain thoughts upon the joyful, but solemn occasion of our present meeting, may help to counteract any dangerous temptation of our spiritual foe, any disgraceful conduct in all who hear them. And for those of the congregation; who happily entertain a proper sense of what we now commemorate, to have been transacted in due time on earth, according to the gracious purpose of the King of heaven, may God inspire their minds with pious reverence, while we partake that blessed feast his mercy has appointed, as an occasional *medicine of the soul*. May we so effectually obey the *last* command of our dear Master;

Master, as through purity of faith, and stedfast perseverance, to engage him to become a principle of life unto our souls. Thus shall we be rendered capable of profiting by the satisfaction he has made to God for sin.

May we all receive *fresh grace* and power, from this good day, to come with lighter *burthens* the next time we meet together at his Holy Table, (should it please the Lord to spare us to another opportunity.) And let us be cautious never to turn our backs upon so desirable an occasion of *confessing* our sins, in pure humility; of imploring Christ's promises to heal our manifold infirmities; and of strengthening the cheering hope, that all our trespasses shall be blotted out, through his most precious sacrifice. May *He*, who was *born*, and *suffered*, to redeem us, and left those visible pledges to support us in the *arduous trial*, assist us in the performance of this bounden service! Now is the time to work out our salvation, through the grace of Christ; and *woe* will surely follow, if we neglect the proffered means provided for our recovery. May God impress these saving truths on all your hearts, that ye may in time discern the things that belong to your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c,

SERMON XVII.

A SHORT

DISCOURSE TO SERVANTS,

ON THE MORNING OF A PUBLIC FAST-DAY,
PREVIOUS TO FAMILY PRAYER.

AS your master, and minister, whose duty it is to set you a becoming example, *as one who must give account* for the failure in religious concerns, which through my neglect, you might otherwise be guilty of, I think it proper to say a few words to you, on the peculiar business of this day, before we join in family prayer.

Our nation is now engaged in an expensive, and dangerous war, with a very wicked, and powerful people. As nothing in all the world can happen but by divine permission, we are naturally led to believe, that God suffers this people to exert their cruel power as an instrument of *his* correction for the crying sins of their own land; and as they have been hitherto far more successful, than could have been apprehended, considering all the force, and skill, of the several states that are united, to stop their mad, and barbarous proceedings; there is no
small

small reason to fear, but they may be permitted to continue the means of punishing both *them* and *us* in a severer measure, than we have yet experienced, since war, in *any* shape, must always be considered, in the light of a *most calamitous visitation*. Doubtless there is no kingdom on the earth, but what deserves *chastisement*, at the hand of God; and therefore it behoves *all* to cry unto Him, for *mercy*, and *support*.

Our gracious Sovereign, and the rulers of our land, under whose mild and happy government we have long enjoyed so many blessings, duly sensible of the sins of the nation, and religiously aware that *the battle is not always to the strong*, but that victory will ever be on *that* side, which the Lord, in his unerring wisdom, shall please to favor, have appointed this day to be kept holy unto God, as a day of *public fasting, prayer, and humiliation*; wherein to confess our great, and numerous sins, and to humble ourselves before him, that so we may prevail with him to have mercy upon us; to turn away the dangers that threaten us; and to prosper our *counsels* and *arms*, in reducing our enemies to reason, and restoring general peace to all.

Now as each person in the kingdom helps to compose the collective body, which we call the *nation*, so the private sins of each, do naturally assist in provoking the Lord to punish us as a *people*; and though there are doubtless many faithful servants of God scattered up and down amongst us; (or the land would long since have been devoted to destruction), yet we must be very sensible,

tible; the number of the ungodly, and wicked, greatly prevails. We cannot but own, that *we* are of the *latter* description, in various sinful respects; it behoves us this day therefore, to call to mind our most particular offences, to condemn ourselves for them, to pray to God to pardon them, and to give us the grace of *repentance*, and longer time to shew our *reformation*.

And that we may prove our *sincerity* in this, we are called upon to practise the custom of *all repenting nations in the world*: we are enjoined, for a *time*, to deny our carnal appetites their usual indulgence, and to mortify our bodies by such acts of *self-denial*, as may bring us to the most deep, and *serious reflection* of our *vileness* and *unworthiness* in the sight of God. And should any be ungraciously inclined to *refuse* complying with this highly needful duty, let them only put these few plain questions to themselves, 1. What possible degree of valuable repentance can *they* possess? What just sense of the danger that threatens, or the punishment we deserve, who think it hard to abstain for a few hours, from their usual meals? And who are unwilling to afford this slender proof of humbling themselves before God, and joining with all true Christians in this easy task of temporary self-denial? Let them only think, for a moment, how *long* they may be *obliged to fast* should God visit us with the calamities experienced by a neighbouring nation, and then even *selfishness* perhaps, may shame the ingratitude, and perverseness of withholding so becoming a means of *striving* to prolong the protection of the Almighty.

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Not that the abstaining from *animal*, or *all* food; for a few hours, can possibly make *any* amends to the *Most High*, for our many *terrible trespasses* against Him: but, that it is a proper method of *humbling*, and *punishing ourselves*, as thereby we lower the spirits, and better prepare the mind for a state of *true godly sorrow*, for having so *often* abused those gifts, and indulgences, which we now willingly forbear.

Besides, by *fasting* we are rendered more sensible of the *use* and *comfort* of our *daily food*; and *that feeling* is calculated to make us more grateful in future, for the blessings we do not deserve. To some, I well know, this will be a very unpleasant attempt, nor will it be thought eligible by *any*, further than *religious principle* supports their resolutions: in short, we submit to it, as an act of *self-denial*.

Thoroughly convinced of the duty, and *necessity* of it, at this *particular time*, if you will follow my *example* and *advice*, you will taste of no food till after the hour of evening service, that is, till *the setting of the sun*, and you will employ the time between the public offices of the church in *reading*, *prayer*, and examining your own past lives and conversation; most earnestly beseeching God to *give you a new heart*, and *to create a right spirit within you*.

It is almost needless to observe to you, that *not* to pay the most *strict* attention to the positive duties of this day, both in public, and in *private*, is *woeful* ~~mockery~~

mockery of God, instead of an endeavor to conciliate his *favor*. It is in a manner, setting him at defiance ; doubting his Almighty power ; despising his needful help ; and in fact, contradicting the whole of those solemn confessions, in which we are going to join in the *public worship* of the Church ; and by such perverse, and rebellious conduct, calling down *further* vengeance on those undutiful subjects, who remain insensible to the necessity of this our bounden sacrifice of penitence, and supplication.

They who can put their hands upon their hearts, and with a *safe conscience* declare, that they cannot serve God so *purely* and *sincerely* by the *strict* observance of the abstinence I have recommended ; let them make their morning meal with *sparingness*, and pray to God at the same time, that this indulgence may not afford him fresh offence, in that it is done for *health* sake only, and not to fly in the face of public Ordinances. As to the *remainder* of the day, as it is *impossible in the nature of things*, that any can suffer in their health by abstaining from their food a few *hours*, but on the contrary, as it is more likely to *contribute to health*, it is my order that no provision of *any kind* may be produced, till the hour I have just now mentioned. This is the only thing we can do, to shew our readiness to obey the pious orders of our Rulers ; to prove that we wholly trust in God for help ; that we are truly sorry for our provocation of his just wrath against us ; and that we retain humble hope that He will turn his sore judgments from us at *this time*, and continue to

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comfort and prosper his people, who now *truly turn* to him, in *weeping, fasting, and mourning*, for their former sins against him.

And that we may obtain grace to discharge our several parts with *diligence* and *fidelity*, let us now unite in such a solemn form of prayer to God, as the nature of our duty this day *particularly* directs us to employ.

PRAYER.

THE PLAIN DUTIES
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WISE AND CHRISTIAN SUBJECTS;
BRING
TWO SERMONS
FOR THE MORNING AND EVENING,
OF THE NINETEENTH OF APRIL, 1793;
THE DAY APPOINTED BY SPECIAL COMMAND OF
HIS MAJESTY,
FOR A GENERAL FAST.

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SERMON XVIII.

FOR THE MORNING OF A GENERAL FAST DAY.

JOEL i. 14.

Sanctify ye a fast; call a solemn assembly: gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord.

BY the pious order of our gracious Sovereign, the rulers of our holy church have appointed this day, my brethren, to be solemnly observed, as a day of *abstinence* and humiliation. Never was there a louder call for *both* these christian exercises throughout the land, than the serious occasion which now presents itself.

In the words of the text, we have an example of the manner which God's people employed of old, to avert the judgments with which their land was threatened; and in the lviith chapter of Isaiah, we have a full description of that *kind* of fast, which is calculated to engage the favour of Heaven, and contrasted with a mere *formal*, or *pretended* worship, which is declared to offend, instead of honoring the Deity. Thus God describes the latter: *Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact at*

your labours; that is, excepting the *ceremonial* part, ye make no difference as to the public amusements and general business of the day: this is an error we must carefully avoid. Again, *Behold*, says he, *ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast in THIS manner to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it SUCH a fast that I have chosen, saith the Lord? wilt thou call THIS a fast, and an acceptable day to me?* The Prophet then declares the genuine notion of a day of abstinence, in these words, and the following verses: *Is not THIS the day that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness?* or in other terms, that every one should confess, and lament their sins, and strive to get free from the snares of vice, by reforming their evil ways of every kind, and turning unto the Lord. In regard to our private conduct, it is impossible to be too careful in the observance of this *second* rule; and as to the public object of our present humiliation, I trust we may entertain an honest hope, that it will appear in the sight of God, to partake of the very necessary, and qualifying token *that we do not fast to smite with the fist of wickedness*; for it is no ambitious view of *conquest*, that impels us to the measure on which we now implore success. It is not from any proud, unjustifiable principle, that we incline to risk the fate of war, but merely to maintain those native rights, with which a bounteous Providence long hath blessed us, to afford our bounden aid to those invaded states, to which we are *allied*, and to restrain that spirit of discord and devastation, which the madness of a wicked

wicked people would excite in every nation. We only aim at being *instrumental*, under the gracious will of heaven, to perform that part God's word requires in the close of the above description, *to undo the heavy burdens* which these enemies of peace have every where imposed; *to let the oppressed go free, and to break the yoke* these numerous tyrants would lay upon a deluded, and defenceless people.

The method I shall take for your instruction at this time will be,

First, to set before you some ancient precedents on scriptural authority for public fasting.

Secondly, I shall take this opportunity of enlarging upon the necessity and benefit of this pious practice under our present circumstances, as a people *engaged in war*. And

Thirdly, I shall enforce the doctrine of the text, by way of *application*, as the only principle on which we can depend for success, to either our *prayers*, our *fastings*, or our *arms*.

In treating each of these heads, I shall have occasion to advance and recommend a variety of other points, which I trust will be found most closely connected with our duty as good subjects, and sincere Christians.

In proportion, then, as we can truly claim a title to this *latter* character, we shall readily acknowledge that the rule of God's word is an indisputable warrant for every description of pious exertions. And to give weight to the particular work in which we are now engaged, it may be useful to mention a few cases from holy writ, which origi-

nated in a cause nearly similar to that which now inclines us to humble ourselves before God, and in the sight of each other. The exercise of *fasting*, hath indeed been common in times of mourning, and affliction, in every age; and from the general example of all nations, under events of a grievous, and alarming nature, we may collect the just sense that mankind have ever held of an all-powerful and perfect Being, who exercises supreme dominion, and is intitled to the obedience of his creatures. Hence, when great calamities have overtaken them, the visitations have led them to acknowledge their wicked actions as the cause, and to deprecate the merited vengeance of the Almighty: to which end, they have as regularly had recourse to penitence, and humiliation, in hopes of being again restored to the favor of their offended guardian, and protector. This remedy, in truth, seems common to our *nature*, for the very heathens, who had not received the benefit of a revealed light, but were only guided by the powers of cultivated reason; even *they* adopted this public test of sorrow for their avowed transgressions, whenever they experienced judgments of so awakening a cast, as could only be resolved into the displeasure of that Supreme Power, who created and ruleth all things. It will be sufficient for the purpose of giving you a due, and serious sense of the business of the day, to instance a few of the most remarkable acts of fasting, and humiliation, as exhibited by God's ancient people, on different occasions of distress, and danger.

In the seventh chapter of the book of Joshua, and sixth verse, we see, that when the recently victorious Israelites, had turned their backs before their enemies, in consequence of their being deserted by the God of their strength, for their wilful provocation of him, *that Joshua, their general, rent his clothes, and fell on his face before the ark of the Lord until even-tide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.* Again; we read in the xxth chapter of the book of Judges, that upon that grievous breach between the tribe of Benjamin, and the rest of the people of Israel, when the latter failed in their expedition against the former, and felt the necessity of the *Almighty arm* to defend their cause, *then all the children of Israel, and all the people,* (probably concluding that they had presumed too far, in trusting chiefly to their own valour,) *went up, and came into the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until the evening, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord.* And at another time, when the people had sinned, as we read in the viith chapter of the first book of Samuel, by giving themselves up to idolatry, and deserting the service of the one true God, and thereby provoking him to withdraw the ark of his presence from them for a long time, and to subject them to much slaughter from their enemies; it is recorded, that on their conviction of the heavy trespass, and their repentance for the same, *they appointed a solemn fast, gathering themselves together unto Mizpeh, and fasting on that day before the Lord, saying, we have sinned against the Lord.* And after that time,

time, the Lord, according to his promise by his servant Samuel, delivered the ark out of the hands of the Philistines.

Further: as to the sentiments that even *heathens* entertained of the expediency of these acts of solemn humiliation, it may be seen at large, in the *iii*d chapter of the Prophet Jonah, where in the remarkable case of the city of Nineveh, the sincerity of its repentance is fully shewn, by the severity of its abstinence, and self-denial, which extended by the King's command, and from the example of his own person, and all under his authority, even to the temporary punishment of the very cattle of the place. From these sacred records, no Christian can harbour a doubt, of the *propriety* and *efficacy* of the duty this day enjoined us. I shall proceed, therefore, to the

Second consideration that interests our inquiry, viz. the *necessity* of the task at this *particular time*, as it concerns us both in a private capacity, and also as a nation, or collective body.

Sin, like a pestilence, is infectious. From the highest to the lowest, men corrupt each other by their evil habits, and unhappy carelessness as to pious concerns. On these occasions, therefore, it behoves every person *separately*, to consider and lament the manifold sins and failings which contribute to the general offence, and determine the Most High to visit us with punishment.

The peculiar nature of my subject, suggests the following observations in this place, that from the fatal neglect of due invocation of the Deity, and a
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professed dependance upon his help, we have too great reason to conclude (when viewed in a *religious* light) that so little success attended a very formidable army, under a most gallant and experienced leader in the last campaign, against the enemies of God, and the peace of the world. It is but too true, I say, that the very *opposers* of anarchy, and universal disorder, seemed even to *copy* those rash levellers in *one* particular. Like *them*, they appeared to trust in the might of their *own arms*; like the vaunting captain of the Assyrian host before Jerusalem, they breathed death and destruction whenever it should please *them* to enforce the execution. They made no appeal to the justice of the cause, as the cause of *Heaven* against an unbelieving, vain, and cruel foe, to God, and his creatures *, and refrained to call upon him regularly, and solemnly as the *God of Battles*, through the medium of his Priests, and Ministers. And though in his unbounded mercy, they did not experience the *entire* fate of the blaspheming Rabshakeh (because *their* object doubtless, in the main, was *good*, and that the trespass was of *omission* only, and not *defiance* like that of the proud Assyrian,) yet their designs for *that* time we see were frustrated, and ~~they~~ likewise suffered a most serious diminution of ~~their~~ boasted strength, and means of victory.

* It might be no unprofitable device to have some such inscription as the following upon the caps or helmets of those embarked in this laudable expedition :

“ The Cause of God and Peace, against Atheists and Assassins.”

Dif-

Different (we bless God) is *our* method of proceeding in the arduous and uncertain enterprise of war; though, indeed, with a general spirit that never yet was tarnished by inglorious conduct, in military exploits (as far as marks the heroism of the creature,) yet happily we feel convinced, that *other* aid is needful, besides the skill and courage of *mere mortals*. We seem to have wisely profited by the above-mentioned error of those with whom we now unite, as instruments in the hands of Providence, to right the cause of the oppressed, and in the noble effort to restore the ancient order of things, and give peace and security to the minds and property of our fellow-creatures, and fellow-christians. We humbly look up to HIM, from whom alone cometh our *defence*, and we supplicate with the public voice, the interference of our Heavenly Father to prosper the *means*, with which he hath most graciously enabled us to assert the claims of genuine right, and freedom. *We presume not to trust in sword, or spear, or shield, alone, (in any arts of war, or the terrible violence of its ruinous engines solely) but we come to our enemies in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of armies, whom they have impiously defied.* We retain a grateful remembrance of *past favors*, and an humble faith, that *He* who mercifully attended to our former earnest supplications, in deep distress, by preserving to us the favorite object of our devout petitions, will still protect our gracious Sovereign from *every* danger, and continue him long, the happy defender of our *religion, laws, and liberties*.

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From the general statement of the *propriety* of public humiliation, it may be profitable to descend to points of a more *particular* cast, and which, as they interest all in the closest sense, may be effectual in rendering the duty of the day more diligently observed, than mere matter of form, and outward compliance, in *any shape*, might otherwise produce. Let us enquire first, then, my brethren, what are the chief *ends* and private *benefits* we profess to pursue, and may reasonably promise ourselves, from a due discharge of this very necessary, and important exercise of pure *repentance*, and *self-denial*.

You must *all* be sensible, that what would be esteemed a *general* injury, must induce of course much *private* misery. What are the things, then, that we hope may be averted by our sincere conversion to God, on this occasion, by the penitent confession of our sins, and hearty prayer for grace to mend our lives in future? In short, for *what* do we now fast? I would request your close attention, (1.) to the several valuable articles we crave to have *continued* to us, and (2.) to the many deplorable events from which we hope to be *delivered*.

In a more comprehensive view, my brethren, we now address Almighty God, that he will give a blessing to our arms, and prevent the numerous calamities which inevitably would overwhelm us, were our inveterate enemies permitted to prevail. In this general prayer, we include God's preservation
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tion of a form of government, which has arrived to a degree of excellence that far surpasses whatever the wisdom of mankind hath yet contrived for the securing the common happiness and prosperity of society, so that we may justly ascribe to the favor and providence of heaven, the possession of so choice a constitution.

Further, we supplicate, that the wise and upright servants of the public, whom the Lord hath raised up, and so long prospered in their councils for the benefit of their country, may never fall victims to the murderous hands of a lawless race, whose hostile and destructive views, they are faithfully and vigorously opposing with all the ardour and integrity of true born Britons; and who consequently are the declared objects of foreign malice, and revenge: and especially, that our most gracious Sovereign, may be defended from the unfeeling rage of those foes to sacred order, and salutary subjection. We cannot surely be too firmly devoted to a King, on whom Heaven has bestowed so many private virtues: who from his pious sense of the divine favor, and assistance, and his attachment to his people, may justly be esteemed the most exemplary Prince that ever filled the throne, who, far from the unnatural wish of retrenching the native liberties of his subjects, has manifested so pure a love of *justice*, and abhorrence of *oppression*, as to extend the influence of his virtuous reign even to the remotest quarter of the globe. No stronger test can be afforded of the consistency, uprightness, and earnestness of his views, than the
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choice of the general *, and the success of the object. The noble servant, as zealous in discharging the important trust, as his Royal Master, in encouraging the glorious design. In short, we petition, that the beautiful and truly admired fabric of our happy constitution, and the favored Sovereign who presides over it, may not be rent in pieces, by the merciless fury of needy plunderers, and impious regicides.

To give the mind some adequate idea of the horror of the scenes to which they are *familiar*, we need only advert, my brethren, to the unequalled barbarities that have been already committed by those bloody tyrants, who sacrilegiously assume the title of *Friends of Liberty*. Actions have been perpetrated under the authority of this mock-legislature, that would not only cause abhorrence to the most uncultivated race of *men*, but even cloy the appetites of the *fiercest beasts of prey*; for *they* are often sated with too much *blood*, whereas to the disgrace of every thing in human form, *these* monsters still thirst for *more*. Unwilling that their fame should die for want of foul enormity, they have crowned their horrible proceedings by the murder

* This *second* Belisarius for magnanimity, disinterested virtue and his brilliant conquest over the barbarian tyrants of the East, hath exhibited talents, and forbearance, equal to that celebrated hero of antiquity, and like him, hath secured a merited fame in the annals of his country, which can only end with *time*. Happily, more fortunate than the illustrious Roman, in serving a more enlightened Master, his valour and integrity, instead of envy and unjust neglect, have met with universal praise, and the due reward of Princely favor.

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of their lawful Monarch; a Prince as innocent, as unfortunate. They first enticed him (with the treacherous pretence of proving his true regard for the happiness of his people) to licence acts, which forfeited his own *just rights*, and in return for such disinterested concession, deprived him of his *life*: contrary to the spirit of their own original decrees, contrary to every thing yet practised in the world, by the most ferocious, and unprincipled people; and as truly savage and unjust, as if they were to assault our gracious King, for loving and protecting his *own* people to the utmost of his power. And *this*, in truth, we may be certain they *would* effect, with cruel pleasure, did it depend upon the dictates of their own depraved, and barbarous inclinations.

These, in a brief and general relation, are the *public* evils we might expect, should Heaven refuse to listen to our prayers, and withhold success to our fleets, and armies.

Some of the miseries of a *private* nature, may now be aptly specified on this occasion. Universal plunder, and the total confiscation of hereditary right, and property, would take place of course. This is one certain consequence of the french liberty, against all who venture to dissent from their *new* method of preserving peace, and happiness. The honest, the upright, and the industrious, must yield to robbers, profligates, and the most worthless of the human race. To enumerate *particulars* of such a melancholy event, would be too dreadfully affecting, the imagination will readily paint the shocking acts that must ensue, were we left to ~~the~~ will

will of a people professing to fear neither God, or devil, and who esteem it the standard of consummate wisdom *, to deny any future state of being. Husbands and wives, parents and children, and every relation of the most endearing nature, may easily conceive the horror of being exposed to the brutal, and ungoverned will, of the most licentious, and merciless people upon earth. Insensible of pity towards their fellow citizens, they will hardly shew feeling for the sufferings of a long envied, and rival nation, which, under Heaven, has been at all times so severe a scourge to their aspiring ambition. We may well imagine the desperate proceedings of a starving rabble, *who having no king in their own land, are desirous to seek inheritance any where to dwell in*; who labouring under every species of distress at home, are animated by the flattering hope of dividing the riches of *a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth*; and who, as a common enemy, would be rendered still more implacable in all their ravages! If any one should doubt of the *truth* of such surmises, they may judge of the event, by the registered facts of their treachery, and robbing of those, whom they have already decoyed, or frightened into this snare. *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel*; and if not, even the heart-rending eloquence of infant innocence, pleading for a father's life, could make ~~the~~ least impression on the obduracy of the *Rulers*, well may we

* These unhappy blinded people particularly boast the title of *Philosophers*.

dread the effect of their *decrees* to their practiced executioners, against all ages, and conditions of people, whom they naturally hate and envy.

Pestilence, or famine, would be preferable visitations, to such excess of woe. So David judged of old; and so will all decide, who know the sad malignity of human nature, when quite devoid of grace, and mercy. Let us pray, therefore, that should we be so unhappy as to live to see the measure of national sin complete, *we may fall into the bands of the Lord, and not of men, for as is his Majesty, so is his mercy.* That God often reserves the wicked to destroy the wicked, we have abundant testimony in the history of his own people, and the remnant of the different nations that were preserved as instruments of *future punishment* for the *sins of Israel*. This is the severest of all temporal visitations. May we never experience its effects! but humbly and fervently exclaim, *O Lord, give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should say, where is now their God?*

Having contemplated the many grievances that wait upon a sinful people, continuing to provoke God's anger, we are naturally led to a more minute consideration of the *cause* of them. This will form a very valuable part of your present instruction. Similar causes will have corresponding effects, at *all times*. If we would escape the *punishment*, it will be obvious wisdom to avoid the *trespass* that produces it. I shall beg leave, therefore, to mention a few of the leading vices which mark the people with whom we are at war, and who have for ages
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proved the great long-suffering of God towards them. The detail will be short, though the consequence of each transgression is truly awakening: and I specify them as a *guard* and *admonition* to *ourselves*, that we may steer wide of the danger, which living in such courses threaten to body and soul.

First, That very offensive trespass in the sight of God, the scandalous profanation of the *Lord's day*, for which that apparently devoted nation are *notorious*. Secondly, the ruinous crime of *adultery*; which is a daring breach of *another positive* commandment, that gradually destroys all sentiment, purity, and honour in either sex; and doubtless, may be given as one principal cause that such unprecedented and shameless instances of cruelty, have been exhibited even by their *women*. Thirdly; that disgraceful levity, and trifling manner, which so strongly stamp extreme degeneracy in the human mind, and really degrade the dignity of our nature. And lastly (and above all) that prevailing spirit of *infidelity*, most falsely called a spirit of *philosophizing*. By philosophy, my friends, is *literally* meant, *a love of wisdom*: I leave it to *yourselves* to judge, how inconsistent, in the present case, this title is, with a conceited opposition to the wisdom of the majority of the most learned, wise, and moral philosophers of all ages. *They* acknowledged, and adored, one eternal, holy, and all powerful Cause. In proportion as any people are addicted to, and increase in the commission of any of these crying sins, they are heaping up judgment against the day of wrath. Mercy is the darling at-

tribute we give to God, and for the sake of *ten*, comparatively, he hath promised he will not confound the wicked and the righteous in temporal ruin. Each individual, therefore, in the nation, is bound to *fast and pray*, lest he be accessary to the augmentation of such crimes, as God has solemnly sworn he will most surely punish. Every one of you, my brethren, that hath obtained the grace of using *family prayer*, should generally add to your public, and private devotions, the prayer in *times of war*, and more *particularly*, on such occasions as the present, some proper form *extraordinary*, to engage the blessing of our Heavenly Father upon our present work, and the important business for which we undertake it. If any *one* of these sins is in itself sufficient to excite the anger of the Deity (nay, if persisted in, to shut the perpetrator out of heaven) what must all *united* merit? and especially, what must the bold, and impious *denial* of his *very being* challenge? when all nature manifests through all her works, the wise creative hand of God omnipotent. *There is neither speech nor language but the voice of his power is heard among them. It is the fool only, that says in his heart* (or as it may be justly interpreted, who secretly *wishes*) *there is no God*. And why does he wish it? Because, notwithstanding all his vain wisdom, and insulting bravadoes, his conscience occasionally alarms him with expectation of the reward of all his evil doings. It is not therefore love of *wisdom*, to which the daring atheist is intitled, but it is love of *wickedness* alone, which constitutes the character of *such* philosophers.

losophers. From their deadly poison may the Lord deliver us! and whereinfoever we transgress as to *other* forbidden respects, may speedy and earnest repentance avail to the amendment of our ways, and conciliate the protection of our Eternal, High, and all-sufficient Friend!

But it is time, my brethren, that we should now examine into the nature of the immediate, and ostensible motive, that can actuate any people to deeds of such extraordinary, and universal violence. It is the charm of an unsubstantial invitation, contained in the sound of LIBERTY AND EQUALITY to *the world at large*. I mean to dwell a little on this celebrated manifesto of *French good-will*, in order both to inform, and confirm you, in your respective duties as loyal subjects, no less than true, and pious Christians. But as I have already detained you rather beyond the usual limits of my discourse, and that the service of the day requires me to employ each portion of it in exercising my humble talent in the fullest manner for your profit, I shall defer the remainder of my exhortations, for your instruction, in the afternoon, and conclude these, my feeble, but hearty efforts of incumbent duty, with a fervent prayer for the general prosperity of the nation.

“ Be merciful, O God, to us, a sinful people,
 “ who have so long enjoyed, and so much abused
 “ thy rich, and sundry blessings, and who still go
 “ on to provoke thy vengeance daily. O Lord,
 “ forgive the many crying sins for which thou
 “ mightest most justly abhor, and cast us off, and
 “ lay

“ lay us desolate ; and so forsake us utterly, as to
“ be favourable to us no more. Grant us yet thy
“ grace, most mighty God, we humbly beseech
“ Thee, so to repent, and amend our lives, that
“ we may be spared and saved from all the judg-
“ ments we have so much deserved ; and this we
“ beg for Jesus Christ’s sake, thy only Son our
“ Lord : To whom, with Thee, and the Holy
“ Ghost, one Almighty God, in mystick Trinity
“ united, be ascribed (as is most due) all power,
“ praise, and glory, now and for ever. Amen.
“ Amen.

SERMON XIX.

PART THE SECOND, FOR THE EVENING.

The same Text.

WE come now, my brethren, to the close of our public service for this solemn day; and according to my purpose in the morning, I mean to renew the subject of my discourse on this occasion, with a strict, but candid, examination of the enticing object that has misled so many; and from a false persuasion of *bettering* the condition of mankind, has rendered them accessory to the spreading of disorder and distress wheresoever their vain and violent endeavours have been carried into execution. Nay so deeply has the infatuation taken place, that *some* (though Heaven be praised, not many, in a comparative estimate) of our own countrymen have caught the infection of innovating prospects, and with a zeal bordering on madness, would encourage the ruinous principles of our bitterest enemies, even at the expence of their own shame, and sure participation in the general havoc; for it is almost impossible to believe, that any in their *senses*, would be so base as *wilfully* to invite destruction to their country, or to compound

(with a people now in just and universal abhorrence) for their own safety, and security, under the complete, and lamentable wreck of national happiness. To combat such unnatural and dangerous proceedings, is the wise design of our most excellent Sovereign, and occupies the vigilance and abilities of his ministers. To check the insidious and ambitious projects of our enemies, they have employed that force which God has put into our hands, to defend the meditated invasion of our rights, and properties, and to preserve entire, that happy constitution in church, and state, which under Providence, has so long secured to us the choicest blessings.

Kings, nobles, clergy, and every order of providential appointments, are the avowed objects, my brethren, of French destruction: but under the mask of this profane ardor, there is a still more powerful motive for their desperate enterprize, and that is the *spoils* they hope to reap, by exciting commotion, and plundering the rightful proprietor of his possessions. As this cannot admit of any doubt, it is surely time to look about us. *War*, we must allow, at any rate, is both precarious, and tremendous in its *nature*. It strikes upon the feelings of humanity, and interferes with innumerable objects of most desirable import to a thriving people: But of two evils, the least is always to be preferred; and where only temporary inconveniences are set against the total annihilation of a state, there can be no demur about the wisdom of the *choice*. We must unanimously decide for *war*, as matter of *defence*, at present,

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or tamely condescend to be insulted, and deprived of all our influence in the scale of power. In the present case, it is equally advisable, as inevitable. The innate perfidy which fed the unhappy contest with our colonies, and obviously laid the ground of all the intestine miseries of France, is still *uniform* in its subtle, and destructive schemes, and cannot be too closely watched, or early interrupted. With *traitors*, and the *faithless*, there is no negotiating but *with sword in hand*. Only to *debate* therefore, on the propriety of caution, and to begin to *arm*, when it is time to *fight*, would have argued deficiency of talents, and *presumption* likewise: our rulers, on the *contrary*, with the *wisdom* of honest guardians of the public safety*, have renewed the measures which heretofore have proved propitious in securing peace, and as in the present instance, the enemy seem determined to uphold the contest, it is both our interest and our duty, to repel their stratagems at the utmost hazard of our lives and fortunes.

Relying on the general fidelity of the nation, the justice and expediency of the *cause*, and the experienced bravery of our countrymen in arms, we hope for *victory*. But still, in pious consideration of the insufficiency of men *alone* to assure success, and that *the battle is not always to the strong*, we here implore that *needful succour* which nothing can resist, and *without* which, every other means *must fail*. Sensible of *his* almighty power *who*

* *Cavendo tuas* will ever be a maxim adopted by all judicious statesmen. To be *ready for war*, is the most obvious, and effectual means of preserving, or of obtaining *peace*.

covereth the head in the day of battle, we will not trust in our bow, neither shall our sword save us, but we call upon the name of the Lord; He is our fortress, and our shield; through him we shall cast out our enemies; through his name will we tread down them that rise up against us. As a wise and faithful isle, we will wait upon him, and in his arm will we trust. Let none of you then be gulled, my friends, with the deceitful prospects of LIBERTY AND EQUALITY, to desert the principles of LOYALTY AND DUTY. But we will now examine into the real import of these ensnaring words.

As to LIBERTY, my brethren, such as is necessary to render honest men, and christians happy, where will it be found on earth, if not in the prosperous territories of Great Britain? A liberty that grants encouragement to licentiousness, and impunity to robbery, and murder, is a species of freedom that I think no one present would wish to see admitted into his country. Now such is the precious, and new invented freedom our neighbours are so tenderly anxious to introduce amongst us.

To be free in the profession of our *religion*, free in our *lawful pursuits*, and the possession and disposal of our *property*, is enough for every reasonable end of happiness, that *this* life possibly can yield us.

Respecting EQUALITY. In the sense in which the French would pass it on the ignorant and credulous portion of mankind, it is *impracticable*. In truth, there is no such thing in *nature*; and we may fairly borrow the language of the second commandment
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in describing its *non-entity*, and affirm, *it is neither in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth*. It is the offspring of FRENZY begotten by *profaneness*, and its *effects* are abundantly sufficient to convince you all, my brethren, of its *real* nature; only consider what it has *already* produced in their own country, and every other place, where the people have been either forced, or mad enough, to adopt it, and you will presently be sick of the very word. I appeal to your own common sense, whether a people who are wading in the blood of their fellow-creatures every where, who plunder, and destroy, without distinction, all who do not consent to their absurd, and wicked system; who are under no influence from *religion*, (the only principle that can soften the hand or heart, or check licentiousness, and injustice;) only resolve *yourselves*, I say, whether such a race have any right to boast of dealing *blessings* to the world, or are likely to promote such measures, as are conducive to the morals, peace, or true prosperity of society. This system of *equality* however, though the contrivance of rebels, and assassins, is not without its advocates. There are three descriptions of people, by whom it is embraced with greedy pleasure. The *ignorant*, the *dissolute*, and the *infatuated*. The first, are enticed and deceived, by the wicked and plausible arts of the other two. The second, having neither property or principle, are ripe for *any* mischief; and the last, through pique, pride, prejudice, and perverseness joined, would hazard all the positive happiness they enjoy,

enjoy, merely for a bubble of theoretic nonsense, rather than relinquish their wild, and dangerous opinions. Such, hardly deserve protection from the troubles, which their rashness provokes, and from which the superior wisdom of their more considerate fellow-subjects, would, under heaven, endeavour to secure them. The enthusiastic admirers of this singular change in worldly affairs, do artfully avail themselves of interested addresses to that portion of mankind, whose scanty lot too often renders them dupes to the seductive reasonings of designing men; the bait held out to them, no doubt, is naturally alluring, but it is merely for want of due consideration, that any will be induced to *take* it. To contrast the circumstances of the rich, and needy, by way of urging the *latter* to repine, and harbor discontent at the disposal of their temporal condition, is no less unjust, than injurious; for even though the poor should sometimes have *reason* to complain of any unkind neglect, from those enabled to relieve them, such obduracy in private persons, hath no foundation in *political*, but only in *moral* abuse. The wealth of individuals, in general, tends rather to *assist* the poor, than *hurt* them, but unless the rich possess a *proper* sense of their relation, upon *religious grounds*, and of the *trust* reposed in them by the sovereign Lord, their opulence ~~will~~ never be so perfectly directed in the channel of benevolence, as might be strictly wished; still, that the poor would be no extraordinary gainers, if all the property of the wealthy was distributed among the multitude, will be very evident, in calculating of
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the number to be benefited, with the property to be divided, and especially if the few following facts are duly weighed, (1.) as both rich and poor are in the very nature of things, reciprocally dependant on each other, and essential in their respective stations to each other's happiness, (*the Lord is the maker of them all*), a state of *equality* must necessarily destroy a large portion of that comfort, which at present, indisputably exists in various ranks and classes of society. It must effectually weaken that active spirit, which keeps the business of the world in motion. But let us for a moment suppose it *practicable*. In such a state, what due encouragement could be given to the display of *genius*, or to the efforts of *unwearied industry*? Extensive manufactures could no longer stand their ground. Without the *means* to feed the finer arts, their occupation must be given up, and in what could such numerous idlers be employed, but rapine, and commotion, for their support? We have a living instance of the *fact*, in all the formerly opulent cities of France, now quite a prey to want and insurrection. Even agriculture would stand still; for those newly raised to *temporary* independence, would *refuse* to labor, and the *degraded* would neither be competent, or *able* to the task. In short, it is level to the understanding of the most ignorant person, that if the consumption of all conditions was *equalized*, commerce necessarily would decline; the grand support of insular wealth and power, must consequently be cut off, and the very existence of a flourishing state no longer tenable. Innumerable facts might be adduced

adduced to shew how contrary to reason, justice, and humanity, a change like this, would prove; but I shall sum up all, with this *one* interesting, and most persuasive voucher. This, in *itself*, will be quite enough to convince you of the folly of expecting any benefit from the *trial*. Only ask yourselves, this single question,—To *whom* are ye to be indebted for this rare *equality*? To your new brethren the French. And can any, the dullest clown, be yet so miserably silly, as to think, that if ever they get footing in this happy land, they will not **FIRST** be paid for the boasted blessing they had brought you? Or that after the swarms of hungry, naked Frenchmen have had *their share*, your remnant of **EQUALITY** could be worth enjoying? For if this nation were come up upon the land, they would soon complete the prophet's description, of *being strong and without numbers, and whose teeth are as the teeth of a lion, who would lay all waste, and cause the priests and ministers to lament: for the meat offering and the drink-offering would be withholden from the house of God*. And should even the ingratitude and perverseness of the people, draw down such heavy judgments on the land, well may we cry out *alas! for the day, for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come*. It behoves us surely, then, to *sanctify a fast, to call a solemn assembly, to gather all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord our God, and cry unto him with all our might, to save and deliver us from such excess of woe*.

For

From this view of the matter, then, we are naturally led to attend to the *power* and *authority* which still upholds such monstrous machinations. There is a circumstance of very considerable import, my brethren, to fix your judgment soundly on this particular head; and that is, the *character* of the *authors*, and *leaders* of this iniquitous scheme. That legislators have been taken from the body of the people, is indeed most true, but it is from the very *dregs* of the community, from the most *dissolute*, and *unprincipled*, not from the well-intentioned, and peaceable citizens. It is undeniable, that among those who have the chief direction of affairs, and who intimidate others by their impetuous, and barbarous acts, we do not hear of any *one* of *strict moral reputation*. Excess of cruelty, treachery, and ingratitude, are the distinguishing traits of their principal senators. As for *religion*, (as before observed) they have made short work with that ingredient towards human happiness, by DENOUNCING the very existence of its glorious object*. Nor must we pass by in this place, one principal abettor of these crimes, who likewise is a legislator†. It must afford concern to every loyal Englishman, that *such* a character should owe his birth to this happy country; but there are villains in *all* lands,

* “A community of atheists never existed out of Mr. Bayle’s head,” says the celebrated Lord Bolingbroke himself, the professed champion of infidelity.—So perplexed and paradoxical are the tenets of this tribe of philosophers.

Vide 8vo. Edition. Philos. Works. Vol. II. Page 228.

† *Prime.*

and

and this new legislature of the French, is the refuge of every consummate knave that can either escape the punishment he deserves at home, or is too abandoned to live with comfort, where *peace* and *virtue* have any rule, and oppose the workings of a turbulent, and vicious spirit. It cherishes all, who have any intellectual abilities to lend a hand in modelling, and affecting the most pernicious schemes. I need scarce *name* the unhappy person here alluded to, a wretch who has prostituted talents, which (if his own) might have gained him valuable, and merited applause and recompence, in an upright cause. But he seems besotted with the dreadful ambition of carrying fire and sword, devastation, and misery, through the earth. Arrived to the most detestable pitch of wickedness (a traitor to his King and country) he has crowned the baseness and barbarity of his vices, with foul hypocrisy, and the pretence of studying the essential comforts of those, he knows must ultimately curse his efforts to seduce them. But it is enough, my brethren, to consult the narrative of this man's *life*, to open your eyes against such poor delusion as he would use to blind you. I shall dismiss a character so truly infamous, and extraordinary, with a specimen of the most unprecedented *contradiction*, and gross *injustice*, that ever dishonored human nature.

It is acknowledged by *himself*, and thus delivered in his *own* words, that the late unfortunate
“ King of France was known to be a friend of the
“ nation; that no man ever possessed a heart so
“ little disposed to the exercise of any thing op-
“ pressive.”

“ pressive.” And in another place, he as positively affirms, “ that the disposition of Louis XVI. and “ that of his predecessor Louis XIV. were as re- “ mote as tyranny, and benevolence,* could render “ them.” This honest praise, even so deadly an enemy, could not withhold; what then can we think of the man who would embark in a cause, that must inevitably ruin the person, and family of so just, and amiable a Potentate? What but the depth of dissimulation, and wanton wickedness, could urge him to unite in destroying the prince of a country, who had never done him the smallest wrong? and from whose legislation itself (even in its most exceptionable form) there was not a *possibility* of *his* being injured? How desperately degenerated must that mind be, who would sacrifice innocence, and the real friend of rational liberty, to the propagation of a system, big with *immediate*, and grievous mischief, and hostile to any lasting benefit, even in its success. Consistent with these atrocious principles, we find him in the close of this lamented Monarch’s fate, exactly imitating the hateful archetype of *all abomination*, who, when he had TAKEN *the price of innocent blood*, declaims upon the virtues of the victim, and thereby magnifies the inherent vileness of the betrayer. Thus conscience to the last, assaults the *worst* of men; forces them to *avow* their *guilt*, even by the vain endeavors to retract its consequence. So the parent of evil beguiles and betrays all those who submit to be taken

* Vide Paine’s inflammatory Treatise, Part I.

captive by him, till he utterly destroys them soul and body, past all recovery; and thus this pestilent promoter of sedition would soften the atrocity of his *wish*, not hesitating even to falsify his own express *denunciation* against *all Kings whatever*, by voting *finally* for the *life* of *him*, he had been uniformly, and flagitiously, industrious to *destroy*.

Upon the whole, my brethren, we may draw this sure conclusion, that a government, pursuing such designs as these before us, and upheld by such a hateful crew of barbarous, self-interested men, must ultimately incur the anger of God. Already, indeed, his bow seems bent; *wrath is gone forth*, in an alarming measure, and the arrows of the Almighty begin to fly against these relentless promoters of misery, and infidelity.

A similar rule, my friends, will equally guide you in a safe opinion of the *general* sentiments of our *own* nation, upon these events, and of the expediency of the measures that are employed to prevent our being surprized by our enemies. When we discover so very small a portion of our senators on *one* side the question, and such *numbers* of the first *abilities*, *property*, and *reputation*, who preponderate on the *other*, it would be folly in the extreme, to doubt on which side *right*, and *reason*, must have place. On the *dissentient* part of *any* cause, indeed, we shall always find some men of brilliant genius, and powerful talents, and it may be, virtuous characters: but the number of the *latter*, will always be the grand criterion to *determine right*. That some in this particular case, should still remain so
pre-

prejudiced and blinded, is hard to be accounted for, on any principle of sound reason, and with such stubborn evidence against their sentiments: But from the gracious interposition of Providence to stop these spreading evils, we may charitably hope, their eyes will soon be opened; that they will recant their errors by future unanimity, and sober wisdom; and that they may have grace to see the danger they have escaped, and join in the bounden thanksgiving that such undeserved and sovereign mercies call for.

How arduous, and hazardous the statesmen's province, we may easily judge, by the opposition, and perplexities, to which they are invariably, and inevitably exposed. Specious orators are ever busy from one pretence or other, to counteract their very best designs. There are many of our fellow-subjects at this most critical juncture, who, though wisely *averse* from any *French* improvements of our government, are yet assiduous to introduce reforms of different kinds. A short remark or two on this subject, may not be inexpedient, at this particular time. Doubtless, there is a zeal without knowledge in *politics*, as well as in *religion*. With respect to *reformation* of the *state*, it is certain there is nothing under heaven, but what needs *amendment*: but as this is the condition of *all nature*, the question is, whether in the attempt to improve the national constitution, we might not risk the *spoiling* it. This has been often found the case, in crude experiments on the *human* frame; the animal, and body politic will bear a near analogy, in their method of treatment;

ment. As in the *former*, there are times when remedies will operate with happier influence, than at *others*, so in the *latter*, we should contrive to suit the objects of improvement to their proper seasons. If a man was in *ever so poor a state of health*, and his house reported to be set on *fire*, we should hardly think him wise to enter upon a course of *medicine*, in *such a situation*; neither would it be judicious, now, that all the powers of government are set in motion, to resist the most desperate evils that ever threatened us, as a *people*, that we should rashly divert their necessary exertion, by calling them off to *other* objects of less immediate import, even was it indisputable, that the constitution labored under such serious maladies, as some would represent. Besides, it remains to be determined, and that by much precarious adventure, whether any novel system that might be adopted, would prove in all points, equal to the present mode of ordering national matters. However plausible the detail on *paper*, it is still but THEORY, and might fail considerably when reduced to *practice* *. To avail myself of

* Even supposing the various alterations proposed to render the representation of the people less corrupt, were all admitted as unexceptionable, what possible *security* could be given, that they would operate equal to their *design*? The principles of *corruption* must be eradicated out of human nature *itself*, before *any* plan can be suggested, that would be proof against the arts and ambition of intriguing men. These ultimately, would render the present designs *abortive*, at least there is no good reason to expect more perfection and benefit than already obtained. In the *favorite* article, (and of most promising consequence in *argument*,) it is to be feared the only differ-

of the *allusion* just now employed, we know that many an excellent constitution has been quite destroyed by quacking; and it is surely safer, to trust a habit that has given proof of sterling *vigor*, than to risk the failure of its most important functions, in the uncertain effort of lending them *renovated power*. Of this we are certain, past all dispute, that under the present interior system of political administration, we are arrived to the most prosperous, powerful, and envied situation the kingdom ever knew, and rivalling every other nation in the world; whatever therefore the real deficiencies of our government may be; while we have credit, and force, to support the balance of power in Europe, I think we have no *material* reason to complain, nor can we be too thankful to Heaven, for the singular, and undeserved blessings we enjoy.

You have now, my brethren, been apprized what miseries may be averted, and what comforts still preserved, by a *peaceable*, and *contented* conduct, under that form of government Providence has most graciously allotted us. And as perhaps many of you may be ignorant of the intimate connection between the *Church and State*, and how essentially *each* depends upon the welfare of the *other*, it will supply a very proper conclusion of my present exhortation, to propose a few observations that may inform and strengthen you in the duties you owe to *both*.

difference this change would introduce, might be more instead of *less* frequent returns of every exceptionable proceeding in *electioneering*; — a most obvious error, and dangerous to be hazarded.

It is incontrovertible, that in every form of government, both ancient, and modern, the neglect of the *established* religion, and confusion of the *sacred order*, has been held out by the writers on these subjects, as the *slow*, but *sure* fore-runner of national decline. Abundant instances of this might be produced both from profane, and sacred history : and if this has been invariably true, even among *heathen* states, how much more likely is the failure of Christian diligence in point of solemn duties, to hasten judgments upon an offending people, who owe so much to Heaven for the blessing of the *Gospel dispensation*. Wherefore, however a degree of brilliant prosperity may, for a *time*, beguile us to slight this very important article, and render us indifferent to *future* events ; all who are truly interested in the *permanent* welfare of their country, will wish to promote the *utmost veneration for holy things* : on one hand, to consult the comfort and tranquillity of those who are *most exemplary* in the *cause of religion* ; and on the other, to prevent as much as possible, its increasing disgrace, which must be the consequence of passing over, and much more by encouraging indolence, and profligacy. In every well-regulated Christian community, we find an establishment under sanction of *national laws*. This seems in the designs of Providence (in point of *outward form*, and certain articles,) to be adapted to the peculiar genius and government of countries. In our *free* constitution, we admit of general toleration respecting sacred worship, and conscientious tenets. Still, as the established Church includes, by far the largest portion of the people, in *her* communion,

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munion,

munion, and from the nature of its polity, is considered as the *principal pillar* of the *state*, it follows, that any injury *one* receives, must necessarily endanger the welfare of the *other*: and from this conclusion it appears, that every truly wise and loyal subject, however he may dissent in any particulars of *forms* or *doctrines* from the National Church, is no less equally *interested* in its *preservation*, and *prosperity*, than he is in the judicial part of the constitution, that secures to him his *liberty*, and *property*, and *every comfort* he enjoys: and that, for this plain reason, just now intimated, that *both* must *stand or fall together*, in consequence of their indissoluble tie, and mutual support. The purity and wisdom of our Constitution in Church and State, consider no man a *less valuable* subject for his being educated *differently* in matters of religion, or professing according to the light and dictates of his private judgment, and the bias it may have received from the varying standard of reason, and abilities, in different men. Nothing is proscribed but such an unwarrantable *interference*, as tends to promote a *schism* in the body politic, and which is no less reprehensible on *Scripture* grounds, than on the principles of salutary subjection to the laws enacted for the general peace and welfare of society. Let each then, evince his zeal for God's honor, in his *own peculiar way*, and be contented with *that* holy service in which he has been trained. Now if those *not* educated in the forms, and tenets of our Established Church, are clearly culpable for *busy meddling*, and disturbance of her peace, and order,

how much *more* so, must *they* be counted, who though from their most distant ancestors, they have been taught to *cherish* her principles, and *observe* her laws, and who even still profess a partial, and natural attachment to her cause, do nevertheless most deeply wound it, by useless *innovations*, and *misplaced zeal*. Whatever measures have any tendency to weaken the wholesome spirit of *subordination* in the lower classes of the people, or to detach that respect from *public offices* (especially of the *sacred order*) must fall under the censure of *schismatical interference*. In the opinion of individuals, perhaps, it may appear but a *small* offence, but it is certainly a positive attack against the appointments of God's ordinary providence: such acts give obvious wounds to *decency and order*; they are unjustifiable *resistances* of holy *ordinances*, and all who propose, or *encourage* them, must be considered as disaffected members of the Mother Church, and unstable friends to the Constitution. The *meaning well*, as to *private* opinion, cannot possibly excuse a *positive offence* against *public* jurisdiction; if therefore we would prove ourselves true advocates for *Church and State*, we must strive our utmost, to *uphold* the same, and hazard nothing that can in the least incline to *lessen* their authority, and legal influence. We must all act within our *proper sphere*, keeping always before us the Apostle's rule of *genuine peace and godliness, to be quiet, and mind our own business*, and leaving both ecclesiastical and civil rule, to the respective, and commissioned characters to whom it may occasionally be intrusted, under the supreme

will and direction of Heaven. In *religious* concerns, *especially*, the dangerous habit of *professional* encroachments should carefully be avoided. Without *unanimity*, and *established order* there is no security for any profitable return in the progressive work of piety. Where Providence, by regular appointments appears to mark the method of proceeding in his service; it is unwarrantable liberty to *innovate*. The usual, and natural consequence of such conduct, is complaint on *one* side, and uncharitable reflexions on the *other*. *Parties* are formed, and the noxious fruits of such *dissention*, are spiritual debate, railings, and partial preference. Substantial morality too frequently is exchanged to superficial, and vain profession; the rage for *novelty* supplants the love of *ancient order*, and a value for *stated forms*: and the dissimulation and hypocrisy of many, are supplied with means of imposition, which they could not pass off so easily, under the *uniform*, and *regular mode* of spiritual instruction *.

Thus,

* But notwithstanding what I have judged expedient to offer on this particular subject as naturally falling in with what relates to the value of *good order*, and *regular government* in general, of which it forms an *essential part*, yet I would not have it understood, that I am an advocate for any degree of violent opposition in religious matters. If after proper remonstrance, (as consistent with due respect to the authority of established office,) no conviction of error takes place, nor any change; more good may be produced to *ourselves*, by a humble submission to the present inconvenience, than from any severe exertions of power, that might perhaps be construed into persecution of a holy cause. In such cases therefore, the Scripture rule will be the safest to pursue. *Let them alone*, and *if it be of man*, it will ultimately come to *nought*; and if it be
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Thus, my brethren, have I endeavoured to discharge the duty of my public office, at this particular time, in the best manner I am able, and in all respects the subject would embrace. I have stated to you the many, and great blessings for which it behoves us all to be most grateful to the Giver of every good gift; and by warning you against the danger and disorder you may incur, by being *discontented, thankless, wavering, and faithless* subjects to your Prince, and country, I have guarded you from falling into the snare of the *tempter*. I have offered you some plain, just, and sound rules, for your conduct, as good citizens of the state in which you are so happy as to live, and I shall conclude with *repeating* the grand means of all to secure the grace of Heaven upon every undertaking of your lives; viz. To avoid all manner of *profaneness* as a *pestilence*; for this, is that horrid crime against God, our gracious, holy, and long-suffering Father, which now lights up the torch of his displeasure against an impious, and rebellious people. On the contrary, pay due, and constant reverence to

of God, it is in vain to resist, lest we be found to fight against God: and as some good may be expected, or is intended in the attempt, it will be better to strive to unite the parties by the bonds of Christian fellowship, than to ferment animosities, and divisions between friends and neighbours, on account of their private prejudices and opinions. Still it must be allowed, that all encroachments on established authority, are highly *improper*, and afford matter of *much trial* in many instances, and that it is not always easy to exercise that humility, and forbearance, which a pure Christian spirit will naturally dictate, on such occasions, as most advisable to encourage.

God's

God's *holy day*. *Hallow my Sabbath*, saith he, *and it shall be a sign between me and thee*. This sign, alas ! we must confess, my brethren, is in our days, too much despised by all descriptions of nominal Christians ; whereas the promise to the due observance of it is so full, so free, and chearing, that it may well engage us to be faithful and obedient in this our bounden duty ; for thus God speaks by the mouth of his Prophet, Isaiah lviii. 13. *If thou call the Sabbath a delight, the Holy of the Lord honorable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.**

Again, respecting the sincerity of our peculiar homage and humiliation this day, *If we rend our hearts instead of our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God, with all our mind, and soul, and strength, then will our alms and prayers and fastings be sanctified and accepted ; they will ascend up to Heaven with a sweet favour ; then will the Lord be jealous for our land, and pity us his people. Then will he move far from us the numerous armies of our boasting enemies, and will drive them into their own land, rendered barren, and desolate, by their rebellion against Him ;*

* Part of this, it is granted, is according to the rigid precept of the *old law*, and is to be understood with such *limitation*, as the sanction of Christian liberty hath graciously added to the *New Covenant*. The admonition therefore, extends no further than to pay that respect to the *Lord's Day*, which as *Christians*, we must reasonably acknowledge to be *due* to it, and for the neglect of which, we shall be as culpable as the Jews, and may expect proportionate visitation according to *our obedience*.

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by the murder of their Prince, and governors, and by the domestic troubles which their scandalous vices have brought upon them. Finally, if we keep this day in purity of *design*, with unfeigned grief for what our sins deserve, and an humble dread of offending the most high God of heaven and earth, then shall we be enabled to exclaim with joy and confidence, *Fear not, O land, be glad, and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things for thee.* O may we ever be prepared to sing this song, to the confusion of all God's enemies, as the blessed means even of *their* conversion to the truth, and to the honour and glory of *his Name*, that all nations may have cause to sing, **THE WORK WILL PROSPER.** The work of *Peace* and *Righteousness* on earth. Amen. For the sake of Jesus Christ; our Lord, and all his true and faithful servants in all lands: To Him, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, &c.

**AN EARNEST CALL
TO SERIOUS CONSIDERATION;
TWO DISCOURSES,
PREACHED ON THE MORNING AND EVENING
OF THE 28th OF FEBRUARY, 1794;
BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY
ROYAL AUTHORITY,
FOR A
GENERAL FAST.**

**“ Cry aloud, spare not, shew the people their transgressions.
ISAIAH lviii. 1.**

**“ —As we are allowed of God, to be put in trust with the Gos-
“ pel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth
“ our hearts.”——1 THESS. ii. 4.**

through Christ, secure *redemption*; or restoration to the divine favor, which was forfeited by original disobedience, and which our Lord has purchased for us by fulfilling the whole law personally, and satisfying offended justice, by suffering in our stead. In whatever light we view the history of our redemption, we shall be convinced, that it was through Christ's temporal poverty that we become rich unto eternal life. And when once we arrive to the knowledge of the grace of God, as it is in Jesus, then, *All things* (as the Apostle observes) *are ours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* Here, in good truth, is much in few words. In fact, this mighty blessing is included in this single passage: viz. that if we belong to Christ in earnest, *As He is God's*, yea even God *Himself*, so clearly, all good things must necessarily be our final portion.

As general instruction is the object of our endeavors from this place, it may be allowable to enlarge a little on this glorious scripture. To real Christians, then, to those who look up to Christ their Savior, as their only friend with God the Father, and to whose mediation nothing will be denied: who are thoroughly sensible, that they require such an advocate, and that without his favor, they must for ever perish. To these, all things are become new. The Apostle, you must observe, is here addressing the *universal Church in Christ*: them who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, them who shew their love by their obedience. He insinuates

otherwise be speedily executed upon them. To this end, he proposes both an *inward* and *outward* mode of conduct, most suitable to their hazardous situation. He *first* advises them to *repent*; secondly, he appoints a fast, as a *sign* of their unfeigned sorrow: and to comfort them under their distressful apprehensions, he *thirdly*, promises a blessing to their *due observance* of it. *Therefore, now, saith the Lord, turn ye even unto me, with all your hearts; and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for He is Gracious, and Merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*

In this character, and with the same cordial exertions, will every faithful minister of the Gospel come forward to-day, to warn the people committed to his charge; and exhort them, from various suitable portions of God's word, *to consider their ways*. This it is our duty to enforce in a manner, that to the best of our judgment may fit their case, and be likely to awaken them to a sense of the urgent necessity of *speedy reformation*.

When I addressed you last year, my brethren, upon the same serious occasion for which we are now again assembled, I took *that* opportunity of proving to you at large, from Holy Writ, the many examples for *public acts of humiliation*, and the great expediency of their being appointed, at times of any national distress, or apprehension of *approaching danger*. I gave you likewise, a very particular view of the various causes of that misery
which

which had then began to desolate a neighbouring, and extensive kingdom, and I entered very minutely, into the *nature* of the many, and alarming consequences that would certainly befall *us*, if God should permit the plagues of insurrection and anarchy to reach our happy land. And as I then felt it very necessary, that we should think *often*, and *seriously* upon this subject, in order to keep alive the good resolutions we charitably hope every true Christian, and lover of his country, will always encourage at such particular times, I published my humble thoughts upon our very precarious situation, that many of you might be supplied with the ready means of *re-considering* the importance of these things, whenever leisure, and a turn for serious reflections, might dispose you to such employment. It will be needless, therefore, now, to *repeat* the deplorable events that most assuredly would affect us *all*, if any one of God's sore judgments should be visited upon us. Indeed your own common observation, during the course of this last year, must have afforded you ample intelligence of the horrors of *civil war*, and your own reason, will direct you to conclude, how fatal to thousands the invasion of such a foe would prove; since besides the cruelties, that would be executed on numbers of defenceless, innocent persons; the utmost resources of *our* country would be inadequate to the supply both of numerous enemies, and the wretched natives, that would experience their tyrannical dominion.

As on this day, it is not likely (at least it ought not to be the case) that your usual meals will risk the danger of being spoiled, I shall make no apology for availing myself of such an opportunity, to be *more full* in what I have prepared for your instruction on this occasion, than the accustomed limits of my preaching would otherwise allow.

The purport of my *present* discourse, will be directed *chiefly*, in examining the becoming frame of mind, and conduct, that the nature of the solemn and necessary duty in which we are now engaged, requires from us, in our respective stations and capacities, as good subjects, and fellow-christians; so as to render us instrumental (through God's compassion) and according to the Prophet's consolatory intimation, to divert the fierce anger of the Lord, from visiting our sins so grievously as they deserve.

In the first place then, it will be proper, in order to fix a profitable conviction of our demerit, to advert to the one *general*, and most probable cause, which has induced such a scene of slaughter and devastation in a neighbouring kingdom, it being the highest wisdom to avail ourselves at all times of the failings of our enemies *, and thereby guard against the like misfortunes becoming *our own portion*. There is no part of history I can find, that furnishes, in *all respects*, an instance of so *speedy, extraordinary, and ruinous* a revolution as the present state of France exhibits: and though the ignorant

“ * *Fas est ab hoste doceri.*”

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and thoughtless multitude, may continue blind and deaf to lessons of religious exhortation from such awakening transactions, yet by the considerate and good, events of such uncommon and alarming magnitude, will ever be resolved into the unerring appointment of the divine providence; and it most nearly concerns *us*, who are so seriously interested in the issue of this unparalleled commotion, to attend to some useful remarks which religious enquiry, and the fate of former states, will justify our bringing home unto ourselves.

When we contemplate then, my brethren, a most awful visitation, that in so short a time has overthrown the *Kingly power*; (for many centuries the established government of the country;) when we see the whole race of a numerous, and powerful *nobility*, in a manner entirely extirpated; and even the national mode of worshipping the Deity (notwithstanding all its long political influence over the common people) completely set aside, and all who could not save themselves of both these distinguished orders, inhumanly sacrificed to the resentment of bloody tyrants, and men of *no* religion, but (on the contrary) professed blasphemers of the Most High God, and all most dear to the *name* and office of his glorified, incarnate Son; what, I say, can we conclude, upon so serious a review as this, but that the hand of God is eminently raised to punish for *long*, and *gross* enormities against Him? Not that we are justifiable in passing any uncharitable sentence against particular sufferers in consequence of the Almighty's ordinary judgments, and

pronounce indiscriminately that *all* who fall in such a persecution, are *guilty persons*. Our Blessed Lord admonishes us against this error, both in the case of the murdered Galileans slain by Pilate, as also, of the unfortunate persons who suffered fatally by the accident at Siloam. *Think ye that they were sinners above all others, because they suffered these things? I tell ye nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Many of these people, on the contrary, might have been *prepared to quit* this miserable scene, and mercifully saved from seeing more, and heavier troubles though (to the shallow view of mortals) the *manner* of their release had something *terrible*, and *unnatural* in it. And indeed, happy are they, whom such dreadful calamities threaten, when they *are taken from the evil to come*, and have passed from the miseries of earth, to the happiness of Paradise, where they are neither tempted, nor molested more; and for such as *remain* in perilous times, that devout character whom a gracious Providence has cast *ashore* towards the close of life, in some retired corner, from whence he views these worldly tumults, is perhaps arrived at the *next* degree of happiness to that of well-disposed spirits, made perfect in another state. It is further no unreasonable presumption, that they who *have* escaped the strange barbarities of their unchristian, deluded countrymen, are so far favored by the divine protection, that they are spared, either to glorify God in *this life*, by improvement in a Christian course of resignation to his will; or from the humble acknowledgment of unmerited reprieve, to repent them

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them of their former trespasses, and *amend their lives*; for when these persecuted Ministers revert to the cruel treatment of their slaughtered brethren, well may they adopt the Psalmist's language and say, *Our bones lie scattered abroad as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.* To give you some idea of the horrible carnage that hath *already* taken place among this devoted people, I can assure you, from the authority of an emigrant Clergyman, of most *respectable character*, who has regularly numbered the registered accounts of those who have fallen in the war, that, (without reckoning the numerous sacrifices to lawless power, or those slain in various skirmishes) the sum amounted to near *two hundred thousand men*, even in June, 1793. It must naturally strike the feelings of *humanity* to reflect on all the obvious circumstances of *severe distress*, that attend the *living* relatives of such a slaughtered host. But what is this (*painful* as it *justly* is) to the still more affecting contemplation of the *Christian*? He considers 200,000 *souls* launched into a state of *endless duration*! He *trembles* for their fate, upon the unalterable decision of the Gospel! His soul is harrowed up, on the reflexion, that as *perfect charity* is an essential passport to eternal peace, (and that without it, neither *faith* or *works* avail) the consequence of the spirits of men appearing before God, blackened with *malice, murder, blasphemy, and daring unbelief*, must be WOE UNUTTERABLE! He grieves for this too probable accession to the kingdom of the EVIL ONE, the inveterate foe of God and man. Now this, my brethren, should rouse

our Christian sentiments towards our very enemies; and animate those prayers particularly adapted to their unhappy situation. Let us implore the intercession of the Savior of mankind to spare this guilty race, from further bloodshed and iniquity; to vouchsafe some precious means to open their eyes in time; to confound the counsels of the *incorrigible*, and to deprive *Satan*, the common Enemy, of his triumph. This is the principle that will qualify all our national sacrifices of *penitence* and *supplication*; that will evince our *desire* to obtain that evangelical spirit, without which, the Apostle tells us, all our other attainments will be in vain. This will be to imitate the prime example of our DIVINE TEACHER, who prayed for his very *murderers*, upon the compassionate principle *that they knew not what they did*. And of these deluded, infatuated victims, we may charitably suppose, *many* are wholly ignorant of the universal misery to which they are assisting. Their case is truly PITIABLE; they are either *Jeduced*, or *driven* to the murder of their countrymen. And in truth, so diabolical is the apostacy of those who *command* their wretched fate, that *their* eternal portion is still *more terrible* to contemplate. As therefore several of our pious forms, include the melancholy case of *Jews*, *Turks*, *Hereticks*, and *Infidels*, let these, who so notoriously deserve the *last* description, engage our constant, and unfeigned petition for their reformation. Under the happy influence of this pure spirit, we shall not be slack, in commiserating the deplorable lot of those afflicted sufferers, who (as just now observed) have escaped the

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the sacrilegious fury of these tyrants, *barely* with their *lives*. A circumstance (my friends) that warrants, nay indeed enjoins our further charitable notice of the lamentable reverse of fortune that hath befallen so many of our fellow creatures, and fellow Christians, however formerly they might be looked upon as political adversaries, or differing from us in the articles of faith, which prejudice of *education*, the force of *habit*, and the universal *influence* of their *superiors*, might jointly justify them to support.

But after all, of this we may be very certain, that the sins of the people at large, have incurred the vengeance of Heaven. As to the higher ranks in France, it is no censure to observe, that they were ever *notoriously* licentious in their *lives*; and equally oppressive in their *sway*. The consequence of *ages* of increasing *levity*, *debauchery*, and *extravagance*, led them naturally from thus foully provoking God, at length to dispute his very *Being*, and to listen to such absurd philosophy as was calculated to silence the occasional sharp reproaches of their conscience, and make them converts, to the *hope of fools, that there was no God*. For this last century, particularly, this deadly poison to mens souls, has been the favorite study of the most brilliant wits in France. To numbers, doubtless, in the more exalted sphere of life, *this* crime has proved *their punishment*, for they have fallen victims to the power that is now alone encouraged by this *horribly delusive system*; and they who still continue to support the revolution, are so infatuated by the principles of

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their impious, and blinded rulers, whom God has now raised up to execute his further purposes of vengeance, that INFIDELITY is become the general CREED, and one terrible means of driving them to *desperation*. In truth, it is a most tremendous, and effectual instrument of destruction, when permission is given to Satan to scourge a sinful people by it; for when an ignorant, wretched creature, is made to believe in the *equality* of ANNIHILATION after death; and to hope for *present* equality of temporal comfort, on this scene only, where there is any consciousness of *miser*y, or *enjoyment*, it will be difficult to imagine what the artifice of *Hell itself*, could ever have invented, more likely to make men unrelenting in destroying those who stand in the way of their *promised*, and *sole hope* of happiness; and who (to whet the spirit of revenge, and assure success) they are given to understand, have been the *cause of all* the *difference* in their *former* station: the extraordinary effects of such pernicious principles, have been fully proved already by repeated acts.

But the business of this day directs us also, to *another* very serious, and affecting enquiry into the source of the misfortunes this singular revolution has produced. It is held as a maxim by some of the wisest men, and most accurate observers of the connection, and natural consequences of human affairs, that whenever the religion of a state falls into disregard, and contempt, it is morally impossible for that state to continue long: and this is an article of the highest moment for us to mind. From the providential trial afforded us, of living
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under a reformation from the errors of that religion, which formed the established church of France, we have had the opportunity of being *long*, and *well* informed as to the several exceptionable, and dangerous tenets of the Romish church; but let us not, because we have hitherto enjoyed so large a share of heavenly favor, therefore boast, and presume upon it; for the *continuance* of these blessings dependeth on the continuance of our *fidelity*, and *obedience*. Mighty empires with their Princes (as in the case before us,) have for their *ingratitude* and wickedness been brought low by the arm of Jehovah. Even this church, now so terribly humbled, had a Christian origin, and object, and at different periods has possessed most eminent saints. It is indisputable, however, that in many parts of its constitution, it is become *essentially* deficient in purity of faith, and practice; and when the increasing light of *learning*, and the declension of the Papal power, became more general, men of improved talents, and growing consequence, took umbrage at the many glaring defects they detected in the mother church, and not being able, or perhaps *disposed*, to aim at any valuable reformation, they combined its faults and influence together, and condemned it wholly as a system of *imposture*, and mere *political contrivance*, to keep the world in awe. Thus from having been long the dupe of religious errors, they fell into the *other* extreme of being *down-right Infidels*. Nor is it to be disguised, that the failings of the *clergy*, as individuals, had too great share in raising this disgust: to assert the *contrary*, would

would be to contradict the uniform evidence of modern history ; and indeed, we have the authority of Holy Scripture to prove, that in most extraordinary visitations from above, the increase of vice, and the defection of the people from religion, are frequently attributed to the *degeneracy of the priesthood* as the *leading cause*. ‘ View Jerusalem of old
 ‘ encompassed with Roman armies *without*, and
 ‘ torn to pieces by the animosity of desperate and
 ‘ bloody factions *within*, and no further commentary is necessary on the threats the Psalmist utters against those, whose disobedient and ungrateful conduct had rendered them objects of divine desertion,’ *therefore shalt thou make them turn their back*. They had not conduct to resist the beginning of their troubles: defect of pious principle left them destitute of any divine support. ‘ Tremble, and repent, is therefore the inference to be drawn by every christian community under Heaven, in which appear the signs of any degeneracy in religious duties.’ This is a circumstance of serious admonition to every class of people in the nation, and to the religious of *all* descriptions, more *especially*, in regard both to their moral, and exemplary deportment.

But it being the blessing of a *regular establishment* in every country, that introduced these observations, so I would further remark, that as in all public acts the minds of the people are necessarily and profitably attracted by *outward forms*; such must consequently be the case in the public worship of the Deity : the *purser* the form indeed, the *baptist* ;

pier; but *some* decent uniformity and appointed ceremonies, are absolutely essential to the existence of general religion, among any people; and this is a truth so universally admitted, and confirmed by *precedent*, that it is become a fundamental principle (as was just now intimated,) that the *established religion* can never be abolished without the *total destruction* of the civil government, of which it forms so valuable a part. Nothing can be more evident than this, by the total subversion of the Church of France. What a dreadful change has taken place in all the *pomp, splendor, riches, and comforts*, of that once powerful hierarchy, now entirely desolated? Let not *any* christian church, (after what has happened in France), continue *to be high minded, but let us fear*. Let our humble and grateful sense of God's mercy, in *still* continuing *our* established form of worship, so influence our *faithful* use of it, that we may prevail on Heaven to appoint *a wall and bulwark round the servants of his temple, and that God may bless her priests with peace, and plenty*. But to prove how woven in the very nature of things, is the considerable effects of *certain outward forms, and popular ceremonies*, do we not see, that even the equalizing system of infidelity, finds the expediency of adopting them? Indeed it probably would never have obtained its present influence, or existed long *without* them. The demagogues are even *lavish* in their use of them; and the gaudy shews of Romish superstition are only changed for the abominable pageantry of *paganism itself*. Instead of processions being graced
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by the attendant figures of eminently holy men deceased—their present celebrations are rendered conspicuous by the filthy remains of *inveterate infidels*, or the busts and portraits of the most *infamous*, and *vicious* characters.

My design in what I have here advanced, my brethren, is to impress the *great necessity* of avoiding *every thing* that may make us instrumental, in drawing down the heaviest judgments that can befall a kingdom, the extirpation of a regular, and uniform establishment in church, and state; and from this conviction, I shall labour at recommending such an universally virtuous conduct, as will prevent the guilt most likely to produce it. I naturally infer from what has been premised, that both priests and people had long and daringly provoked the merciful forbearance of the SUPREME; and that their very severe punishment holds out an awful warning to *other nations*, to *take heed unto their ways*, and if possible to conciliate the favor of Heaven, *before wrath is gone out, and the avenging Angel be commissioned to destroy*. Lest God should extend his judgments to us also, and (as he threatens in these words of his holy Prophet, Isaiah, lxv. 12.) include our devoted country in this afflictive sentence. *Therefore will I number you to the sword, and you also shall bow down to the slaughter, because when I called (that is, when I warned you by the fate of others in consequence of their iniquity) ye did not answer; when I spake, ye would not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not.*

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Words of such fearful import, my brethren, do now naturally lead us to consider how far *we* may have deserved this character, and in what *particulars*, it is to be feared, all ranks of men have imitated the ruinous manners of our neighbour.

As to the majority of the nobler and higher orders in society, they will do well to examine how far they have been just stewards of the superior talents, and choice good things intrusted to *their* care, for trial of their virtues, and gratitude to the gracious Disposer of all conditions. If they are possessed of sound religious principles, they will acknowledge that it is in the providence of God, they are *allotted to inherit the labours of the people, that they may observe his statutes, and obey his laws, and praise his holy name.* Their lot having fallen *in a land flowing with milk and honey.* ‘Let them reflect that God has given them riches and the *leisure*, riches procure, not for the purpose of indulging, and corrupting themselves, and others, but that they may glorify *him*, benefit their neighbours, and save their *own souls* :’ and their too often employing these glorious means to quite *contrary ends*, is the case our Blessed Master represents of the very arduous conflict to which a *rich man* naturally is exposed. 7

As to the CLERGY, it behoves us to prove ourselves, how far we have been *faithful* in our still more serious trust, in that *our charge*, and calling exacts *peculiar* diligence, as *stewards of the mysteries of salvation* ; as the *salt of the earth* ; as being commanded *to let our light so shine among men, that our*
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Heavenly Father may be glorified by the fidelity of our commission. Our responsibility becometh great indeed. It behoves us to consider whether we have been industrious or slothful? Zealous, or lukewarm in our holy office? Earnest and sincere in delivering the whole counsel of God unto our flocks, that the blood of none may be laid to our charge? Whether we have been exemplary in our lives and conversation, that our people may be edified thereby, lest after preaching to others, we ourselves should be cast away. Let many judge themselves, whether instead of regularly, and indefatigably laboring to discharge their outward duties, they do not stand self-condemned for scarcely ever preaching at all? or when they do occasionally appear, as public teachers, whether they have most conscientiously delivered the pure milk of the word, the plain healing doctrines of gospel penitence, and salvation, through the merits and mediation of that only Blessed Name, given under Heaven, by which we can be saved, or whether, they have not rather studied the effects of human eloquence in their discourses, and employed too often an unconvincing and (perhaps to MANY) an unintelligible style of professional instruction.

Let the poor of the earth examine themselves, whether they are content and resigned to the lot in which the wisdom of Providence has placed them, doubtless, as most conducive in their respective stations, to their preparation for eternal happiness, and the reward of all their present trials. Or whether they do not murmur at the decrees of the Almighty? whether they do not envy their
superiors

superiors in rank and fortune? whether they do not take unlawful ways to better their condition? or whether they are not too ready to rebel against the appointments established in God's wisdom for the continuance of peace, and order, by which untoward, discontented temper, they join the general provocation of national judgments? Judgments, already visited by the Most High, that the people may perceive the ruin attending a blind rage for *novelty*, and resisting the ordinance of God, by which they court both *temporal* and *eternal misery*. In short, the *higher* powers must seriously reflect, how far their injudicious, and faulty conduct, may gradually have been productive of the unsettled principles of the *lower* class of people; and however great *their reproach*, and punishment will be, let not the *others* imagine, that they are justifiable in violating the *known* and settled order of society; in rebelling against their lawful rulers, and joining the inveterate enemies of their country to introduce all manner of misery.

Respecting men of rank and fortune, it is to be feared, too many have been contaminated by the dissolute manners of our suffering neighbours. The characteristic vices of the French have long been gaining ground amongst us. Adultery, lasciviousness, unmanly levity, excessive dissipation, extravagance, and infidelity, have many votaries *among those that are full and have much to spare*. May the all-powerful grace of God avert the infection of indolence and sensual pleasure, from ever pervading the *sacred order*! It is a melancholy truth
however,

however, that the present age is grown to such a pitch of irreligion, and profaneness, that the ministerial office no longer has that check upon the manners of the people, which in the humble times of due respect to God's appointed servants, was used to be effectual in securing a *modest* (if not a *pious*) outward conduct. To which part chiefly, or whether to the failings of *both*, this change is to be placed, I shall not venture to decide, but that it unhappily *exists*, is undeniable, and calls aloud for reformation. The affectionate remonstrance of the Lord, as delivered in Psalm lxxxi. 14. and a pious comment on it by an excellent and eminent divine, will suit our general case at this time: *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.* "It is the transgressions, doubtless, of the church, as a collective body, that gives her enemies all their power against her calling the Avenger from afar, and setting an edge on the sword of the Persecutor. Where the carcase is (that is, where the *spirit* of religion being departed, and has left the body to *corrupt*) there the Eagles are gathered together; in other words, all the instruments of vengeance, terrestrial and infernal, flock by permission to the prey of the impenitent rebellious creatures." But should it be contested by some, that upon the *whole*, there is not yet *materially*, so great alteration for the worse, in any walk of life, as to make us apprehensive of the *measure of our iniquities being filled up*;

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let us only take a short view of the conduct of many, comparatively with the spirit of the *pious prayer*, and *confessions*, they have openly offered up unto God this day : as, for example : What just pretensions can any one have to sound and vital piety, who, while imploring God's goodness " to " cleanse their souls by the influence of his Holy " Spirit, to give them grace to put away all un- " godliness, and sinful lusts, and to hold fast the " profession of their faith in purity of heart and " mind, that his judgments may be with-drawn " from us."—What a MOCKERY of a profession, " will it prove, I say, my brethren, to pray to " God not to suffer us to return to the indulgence " of those evil passions and desires which are the " cause of his displeasure"*? if at the same time we should be found meditating a vain and public exhibition of ourselves perhaps *to-morrow*, in places where nothing but the " vainest imaginations"† are represented, and calculated in their very *essence*, to grieve the Spirit of piety, and grace, and to fill us with a spirit as contrary to genuine holiness, and true Christian faith, as darkness is opposite to light itself? In short, in the sense of these truly evangelical words of this day's service, we supplicate God NOT *to lead us into temptation*‡; yet scarcely have we left his house, but we rush into a *boist* of danger; where every circumstance encourages vice in all shapes. *Pride, vanity, ostentation, envy, extravagance, folly, and iniquity* unite to throw us off our guard, and to

* Words of the Form of Prayer.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

drown the voice of conscience, and the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance; and this is a truth of which we may be certain, that the soul that is thus habituated to sensual pleasure, and vain indulgences, can never have room or relish for pure, and spiritual delights.

But it is time I should draw to a conclusion. Let our just fear, then, for the insincerity of many nominal Christians, put us upon our guard, to act a *different* part; let us truly cultivate that portion of the text, which directs us to the probable means of still experiencing the favor of the Most High. Let us *rend our hearts, and not our garments, and turn to instead of FROM the Lord*. Mere *formal* sorrow, the *appearance* only of concern, unless the *heart* is deeply smitten, and indignant for its offences, will profit nothing. It is in the power of the greatest hypocrites to offer these *outward* signs of grief, and still retain a secret love for all their carnal trespasses. We must rend our *hearts* this day, if we sincerely wish to keep the Lord upon our side.

The *heart*, in its literal sense, is that most noble part in the wonderful construction of our bodily frame, which gives motion to every vital power; when *that* is essentially hurt, immediate death ensues; and in proportion as it is any ways *affected*, disorders of various kinds, are communicated to every other part. From its primary consequence to mortal life, the word is figuratively used, by moral and religious writers, to signify the seat of human actions, good, or evil. Thus our Blessed Lord, who knew the hearts of men *most intimately*,
assures

assures us that *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness and blasphemies*. And the wise man, who by woeful experience, had no small acquaintance with its infirmity, and corruption, declares it to be deceitful *above all things, desperately wicked*. Nay, so disposed to evil, in consequence of man's *fallen nature*, that he aggravates the description of its impurity, by expressing a doubt, whether it was possible to discover *all* its sin; *who*, (says he) *can know it?* And one of the finest writers of our nation, most deeply sensible of this sad truth, from his great knowledge of mankind, most forcibly confirms the fact, in these affecting lines,

“ Heaven's Sovereign faves all beings but *himself*

“ That *hideous* sight, a **NAKED** human heart.”

Hence is estimated, the abundant streams of wickedness which flow from that polluted source. This is the nature we every one possess, 'till God corrects the evil principle within us, and this is what the Prophet urges us in the text to *rend*, or *tear* to pieces. As the quickest way of destroying a mortal, would be to strike at the heart at *once*; so, if we would make any valuable improvement in our lives, we must endeavor to obtain *a new heart*, to cleanse this *fountain* of all evil. But as this is only in the power of God to do, we must therefore earnestly implore his *help* to promote the necessary work. We must forsake every evil way, and turn unto the Lord our God, and incessantly pray, *Turn thou us O Lord, and so shall we be turned*. Now this

implies repentance for the *past*; not, (as I before observed,) a merely passionate expression of our grief, such as the rending or destroying our clothes would signify, but the *deepest affliction of the heart*; for it is *there*, all sin begins, by its *desiring, wandering*, and going astray after forbidden objects; and whence proceeds all inattention to the ways of God, his mercies, and our duty to him. Lust in the heart; like vapour in the stomach, soon affects the head, and clouds the understanding. Now this, (my brethren) I need hardly tell you, is a *sad disorder*, and a very arduous task to cure; but it is no less *necessary* than difficult to be accomplished; and were not this the *gift of God*, likewise, we might be hopeless of ever obtaining any valuable repentance, for *truly* to repent, is not only to break off every evil *habit* of sin, (a very laborious, painful work indeed) but to feel such detestation of *ourselves*, for having *committed* it, as to go mourning *all our days*, for our base ingratitude towards so glorious a Benefactor, who gave us being at *first*, that we might serve him faithfully *here*, and warns us against sin, that we may live with him for *ever*. On *this* account, you see, we must *thoroughly hate* it, as well as *leave it off*; strive to root out the increased corruption it has wrought in our naturally depraved hearts, no less than fear the merited punishment it threatens; and abhor every circumstance, however agreeable to our carnal nature, which sin invites us to commit: 1. because it is the command of God to do so; 2. because by yielding to its temptations, we shall be ever separated from his
love,

love, and made intirely incapable of heavenly happiness. Yet, alas! men continue deliberately to commit those sins which the Almighty stands engaged to punish with destruction! And how can we then wonder, that while we go on to provoke his unmerited long suffering, he at *last* should exert his power, and exercise just vengeance on the ungodly.

There is a spirit of worldly confidence and security, which the generality of people are too apt to encourage, and which amounts in great measure, to an *independance* upon God's *protection*, if not an open contempt of it. They build upon our manifold *political resources*; our national character for *bravery*; our celebrated advantages over the enemy in *former times*; our *naval* force *especially*, and the reputed skill of its *commanders*. All these, no doubt, are valuable *helps*, for which it is impossible to shew ourselves *too grateful* to our heavenly Benefactor; but to place any hope in these, without the *blessing of Omnipotence*, what is it but wicked boasting in the *arm of flesh*? And so slack are men in general, to look up to *Him*, from whence *alone* our help proceeds, that we seldom hear them mentioned *together*. When *we* consider our present situation, my brethren, as a people exposed to many dangers from the uncertain events of war, let us use ourselves to a *wiser* method of discoursing upon the subject. Let us adopt the language of the Psalmist, *Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord. This* should be the resolution of every Christian

King, and people, in the day of *battle* or *adversity*! What is the boasted valour of man's own strength, and all the mightiest preparations of his power, if God vouchsafes not to *assist the enterprize*? He who commands the dread artillery of Heaven, who could destroy 185,000 in a *night*; who marshals the winds, and they obey him, who directs the tempests to his destroying purpose, He alone is to be feared, and trusted in, yet we are apt to fear every frown, but those of *Heaven*; and one *poor, vain, silly* creature, shall, through a course of 60 or 70 years, incessantly, and *audaciously* tempt and provoke the Maker and Preserver of the universe; what is this but madness! Why are the miraculous powers of the Almighty recorded in the book of life, but to lead us to the reflexion that God, and God *only*, is the proper object of our confidence, and fear? since neither the wisdom of the wise, nor the power of the mighty, nor the whole *world itself*, can stand a single moment before him, when once his anger is terribly purposed to punish, and destroy.— We should therefore keep in mind this profitable and eternal truth; *That except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* In every undertaking of worldly business, or religious improvement, the blessing of the Lord must accompany the labours of the creature, to render them *effectual*. No work can prosper without him, nor can any design miscarry under *his direction*, which are equally necessary to the *builder* in the time of *peace*, as to the *soldier* in time of *war*. An admonition highly deserving notice of every Governor and Minister,

however

however endowed with talents, or upheld by the popular favor.

In short, *They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion.* While the inhabitants of Jerusalem continued to trust in God, this was the case with *them*; but when they became faithless, and disobedient, she became weak, and like to any other city. Let us not forget, that the promises to *us*, like those to Israel of old, are equally conditional. *Because of unbelief, they were broken off: let us take care, to stand fast, in the faith.*

And it is through want of this faith, or proper confidence in God's power and goodness, that some on the *other* hand, are no less ready to *despond*, and from inconsideration of God's most tender mercy towards his faithful servants, are for giving up the cause as *desperate*. Viewing the too general depravity of the age with an eye of just concern and apprehension, they are apt to cry, *If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?* That is, the foundations or principles of religion and law being despised, and trampled upon, what encouragement is there for any further resistance? What can a man engaged in the most righteous undertaking hope for, when *that* appears the case? Such arguments have ever been urged by the *timid* in similar cases, but they are *false*, and steadfastly to be *resisted*; since all is *not over*, while there is *any* left to reprove public error, and bear honest testimony to the *truth*, and the man who does so, with becoming spirit, may stop a Prince, or a Senator when in full career to ruin, and prove happily instrumental,

to recover the day. And this leads me to the *last* observation I shall make at this time, concerning those gross and dangerous sins by which, as individuals, or a nation, we may be truly said to offend the Lord our God, and provoke him finally to desert our cause.

There is *one* transgression, my brethren, which on *no* account must be passed over at this time, for it is in *itself alone, fully sufficient* to bring the *heaviest* judgments on any land professing to believe in God; I mean the profanation of the *sabbath-day*; and how deplorably that is become the custom in *our* land, is quite unnecessary for me to prove; general observation must yield the *sad consent*. Instead of pious veneration to God's positive *law*, it is most scandalously dishonored by *all* descriptions of people, but chiefly by those, whose *example* in this respect, is of the *utmost consequence* to the good order of society, and whose life of *leisure*, from their more exalted station, leaves them without a particle of excuse for frequently employing this blessed season in public travelling, and unprofitable visits. It is no less disgraceful to a Christian land, to see the roads on God's most holy day, as full of public stages, and the concerns of *TRADE*, as in the six appointed days for *worldly business*. In necessary consequence of this, the *little* opportunity of those in *public life*, to repair the weekly errors induced by the hurry of their dangerous occupations, is wholly interrupted, and instead of *ballowing*, they assist in *violating* God's sacred law. This surely calls for a *reform*. The regular veneration of our pious ancestors

tors in this important article of Christian duty, condemns the graceless conduct of their *long protected*, and *ungrateful* posterity. The awful threatening of the Psalmist, should awaken us to a penitent sense of this gross impiety; *It is time for thee, O Lord, to work, for they have made void my law.* This is done by all who deny its authority or its obligation; by all who render it of no effect by their vicious *writings*, or their *lives*. Of *this* offence, our enemies the French, have been *notoriously guilty*. May *we* profit by their chastisement! This sin, hath *ever* been confessed the *inlet* of all *other* vice whatever, and it will invariably be seen, wherever a deluge of wickedness and impiety entering at these gates, hath overwhelmed a land, (as is the lamentable case of the profane and unhappy people of France) it may be justly said *it is time for the Lord to work*. There is a certain measure of iniquity, which when communities, or individuals, have *filled up*, the destroying angel is dispatched, and executes his dire commission. Among the numerous testimonies that might be brought from Holy Writ to shew how *highly* God resents the profanation of the *Sabbath*, this single passage from Nehemiah xiii. 17, 18. will be *abundantly sufficient*, and I select it in *particular*, because it is directly levelled at *that* order of men, whose *virtuous*, or *vicious* precedent, hath the *happiest*, or the most *pernicious* effect in determining the deportment of their inferiors and dependants, and who seem in *all times*, to have been the persons culpable of this ungracious trespass. *Then I contended with the*
NOBLES

NOBLES of Judah, and said unto them, *what evil thing is this that ye do, to violate the Sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus? And did not God bring all this evil upon us, and this city? Yet ye would bring MORE wrath upon the people by profaning this holy day.* Let the guilty in this great crime apply the just reproof as to *themselves*; and repent them of their foul transgressions.

‘ The true state of any people, is to be estimated
 ‘ from one single circumstance, viz. whether in
 ‘ their *actions* they *remember*, or *forget* God. Re-
 ‘ membrance of him is the well-spring of *virtue*;
 ‘ forgetfulness of him the fountain of *vice*; let men
 ‘ support religion, and God will support them.
 As the *fear, therefore, of God, is the beginning of wisdom*, let us pray, that our Rulers, and Magistrates, may evince *their good understanding*, by every future exertion of their authority to vindicate the honor of God’s laws, and especially to remove the censure they must incur in the judgment of every real Christian for not preventing the *public* abuses of divine appointments, which depends *entirely* upon a pious resolution in the legislature.

Finally; as God *hath* ‘ *threatened to tread down all*
 ‘ *them that err from his statutes through deceit, and*
 ‘ *falsehood*. Surely the fulfilling of his dreadful
 ‘ judgment in all ages of the world, and which he
 ‘ still *can*, and *will* execute upon impenitent sinners’
 (especially the alarming vengeance we see *immediately* exercised so signally upon our ungodly neighbors;) ‘ surely, I say, this should afford us a most
 ‘ kind

✓ kind warning, and powerful motive to obedience.'

And as we *all* bear a very grievous part both in those sins of commission, and neglect, which if not confessed, and mended, will assuredly light up the anger of the Lord to visit *us* with some severe correction in the end: Let us unite *most fervently*, in the words of God's Prophet, and faithful servant, and humbly beseech him, *to have mercy upon us*; to forgive us our past sins, and grant us grace to serve him better for the future. *O Lord, have mercy upon us*, must be the *natural* cry of every trembling sinner, under dread of merited judgment. But let all know who have returned unto the serving of their Maker with all their *heart*, with a truly penitent sense of their offences, 'that for their *comfort*,
' the Lord *will* have mercy upon them in that day,
' when unreformed wickedness shall be succeeded
' by torment, and pride shall end in shame, and
' utter confusion. When patient poverty shall
' inherit everlasting riches, and oppressed humility
' shall be exalted to a throne above the stars.'

God grant us grace in time, to cultivate the virtues that may prepare us to be *partakers* of these blessed promises, for the *sake*, and through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, praise, and power, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXI.

FOR THE EVENING OF A GENERAL FAST-DAY.

The same Text.

WE are once more met this day, my brethren, upon the solemn occasion of its useful appointment; for the important purpose of imploring God to pardon our offences, and avert the judgments we have justly merited at his hands. If you have any serious attachment, therefore, for what *ought* to be most dear to you on earth, your *property, wives, children, friends*, or your *own lives*; nay, if you duly regard what is of far *greater* value than the *whole earth*, or even *life itself*, (the safety of your *eternal souls*); let us all, then, endeavor to set a good example this day by our most sincere attention to the duties it enjoins. Let us beware of *doubly* provoking Heaven by acts of merely formal deprecation of God's anger; and let us take care that we do not deserve the heavy sentence He hath of old denounced, against all hypocritical humiliation. O may we not prove accessory to such a divine contempt of our services, as that once uttered by the Prophet Isaiah, i. 13. *Bring no more vain oblations,*

oblations, incense is an abomination to me; the new moon and the sabbath, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity even the solemn meeting; YOUR APPOINTED DAYS my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. Thus terribly doth the Lord denounce by the mouth of his holy servant, against all religious service that hath nothing but outward *form* to recommend it. But if you would gratify the present bounden sacrifice of penitential sorrow; then take the Lord's advice, *Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mens eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.*

But it is to be feared, that in many places, and by numerous individuals, even such severe displeasure may be justly due. How many on this holy occasion, (so well intentioned by our church and state), will turn the solemn ordinance into mere parade? How many will make a *formal* fast all day, and revel and *feast* luxuriously at night? And can any sin exceed such wilful mockery of God! For it is not *such* a fast that God requires at their hands. Were people but truly sensible of the great necessity of public humiliation for their provocation of the Deity; and earnestly determined to promote it by their exemplary behavior. Their deep conviction, and inward sorrow, would thus express itself in David's words,—*My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread,* 'the consequence of real grief upon the spirits, we know is apt to render us regardless of that food, whose nature is to recruit, and raise
' them.

' them. Of this there are eminent instances in the
 ' various cases of *Abab, David, Daniel*, and other
 ' sorrowing penitents. They all *forgot*, that is,
 ' *refused* to eat their bread, while trouble set fore
 ' upon them, such natural companions are mourn-
 ' ing and fasting, when *unaffected*.' But it is too
 likely, that the unwillingness in many, *to fast at all*
 will give very different proofs of the sincerity of
 their repentance. How many this day have openly
 professed their deep concern, not only for their *own*,
 and the joint and glaring trespasses of the *people*,
 who to-morrow perhaps, will mingle with the
 thoughtless multitude again; contribute largely to
 the increase of fashionable follies; nay injure their
 families, to maintain a figure at the most unprofit-
 able diversions, while every nerve and sinew of
 oeconomy is necessary to defray the charge of an
 unavoidable, and I may truly say, a HOLY WAR.—
 Holy, not in the meaning of any religious *faction*,
 or *fanatical* rage, but because it is an indispensable
 defence against a race of impious, and usurping ty-
 rants, who holding *God*, his *Revelation*, and every
 religious *Ordinance* in *contempt*, are bold to propo-
 gate the most destructive principles, and would sow
 rebellion and confusion throughout the kingdoms of
 the earth. With *such*, it is impossible to hold any
fasts, since they have nothing to *bind* them but their
 own uncertain, and licentious will. Still they are
 formidable, (as instruments in the hand of God to
punish) and require the wisest, and most active
 measures, to repel their ruinous designs; and espe-
 cially they demand our application to that Almighty
 Power,

Power, who speedily can restrain the lawless violence of the wicked; give wisdom to the *counsels*, and victory to the *arms* we naturally employ to check their rage; and thereby confine the scourge to those who madly disdain dependence upon his help, and neither respect his *promises*, or *threats*. But if we are faithful in this *needful trust*, there is no fear but God in his good time *will pour out vengeance upon the heathen that have not known him, and on the kingdom that hath ceased to call upon his name*. They are to be considered as engines of chastisement under Divine control, ‘for thus of old, pagan ambition and cruelty, were often employed to correct offending Israel, but were themselves most fully punished in their turn, by other powers raised up for that just purpose.’ But alas! my brethren, with all these terrors of the Lord so near us, we discover no relaxation in the general pursuit of sensual pleasure, and the most vain delights. It is true, some human exertions have been made by many considerate, and generous individuals, to furnish temporary comfort to those, whose lot exposes them to the *brunt of battle*; nor is it more than *just*, that *they* should enjoy all possible support, whose courage, sufferings, and *lives*, are instrumental in defending our possessions, and every thing most dear to us. But what is the utmost of those contributions comparatively with the continual demands of *luxury*, and the superfluous gratifications of the opulent? What proportion do they bear to the immense subscriptions towards multiplying places of public entertainment? in *themselves*,

selves, by no means strictly *christian*; but on the contrary, in abundant instances (were this a proper place to prove it), productive of most dangerous levity, and positive profaneness. As the increasing degeneracy, and ruinous profuseness of the times, have occasioned me to touch on articles of this nature, I cannot avoid reverting to a late, and horrible calamity, fatal, in the *instant death* of many, who were assembled at a *public theatre*. Surely, in times like these, when war and desolation are at our very doors, such sad events may, without any imputation of too severe reflexion, be termed a *serious, and admonitory* judgment, to caution *others* from persisting in the waste of so much *precious time*, and abusing the possibly *short space* allotted them to prepare for their *irrevocable doom*; and to cultivate repentance for the manifold omissions, and heavy transgressions of their lives. Could the *fourteen* souls thus shockingly hurried into the boundless *theatre of eternity*! thus *quickly* summoned to the presence of an holy, just, and all perfect God; could *they* have had a temporary relief afforded them, when crying out for help to all around; we may charitably conclude, they would have viewed with *horror* their miserable *preparation* in such pursuits, for scenes of endless *purity*, and *praise*, and have been very circumspect, in future, from hazarding so *sudden*, and *ill-timed* an audit, before the GLORIOUS MAJESTY OF HEAVEN!

It is too common for the *young* indeed, (from various causes attending their inexperienced state),

to be misled by fashionable precedent. Eager curiosity, deficiency of religious consideration, vivacity of spirits, and the torrent of licentious custom, may carry *them* with the tide of modern dissipation. *They*, perhaps, experience but little influence of grace upon their minds. But people in the *wane* of life; parents possessing every benefit from the hand of *time*; whose incumbent duty is regular *example*, no less than prudent *counsel*; people indebted, in the course of nature, to Divine protection for *miracles* of *mercies*; for thousands of *acknowledged* deliverances, and ten times ten thousand known to their heavenly *Preserver* only; *themselves*, perhaps, the strenuous advocates for every christian grace, in *private life*; for *them* to mingle in the common herd of simple, uninformed, and thoughtless idlers; to attend their dearest relations to the shrine of *wantonness*, *impiety*, and every dissolute invention that can estrange the heart from *serious* thoughts; *this* marks such inconsistency of character, such folly, such mockery of all sincere affection towards *holy* things, that to neglect an opportunity of noticing these dangerous habits on such a *particular* occasion, as the present, would merit justifiable *reproach*, and suppose the speaker unconcerned for the effect of such prevailing vanities, as must be hateful to an all-perfect, holy Being. He assures us, that his temple is the *heart* of all who *truly* love him, and into which no vain, or filthy fancy, can be *wilfully* indulged, by any one desirous of becoming his disciple.

Now

Now if this is so, then consequently, to pass *whole hours* in exercising the mind upon such unprofitable subjects, and *premeditatedly* to give attention to the trifling productions of *loose*, and *mercenary* writers; must be allowed a very different effort from the injunction in the text, *to turn to God* WITH ALL THE HEART. Such habitual practice, speaks positive condemnation to the inconsiderate spectator, who would be thought possessed of *any serious acquisition* of *bumble love* towards God, or even desire for the growth of general virtue. This universal turn for levity, supplies indisputable proof, that the influence of sober manners, and solid piety, is greatly on the *decline* amongst us. Such a rage for every kind of sensual pleasure, and idle sports, can never be agreeable to that glorious Being, who deserves the *first* place in our affections, and which it is *impossible* to afford him, while the mind is occupied by such seductive entertainments; while luxury, extravagance, and dissipation, nourish a disaffection towards every *serious principle*. ‘These are the maladies under which
 ‘ our body politic now languishes; it is this dis-
 ‘ ease that weakens our *counsels*, and *undertakings*,
 ‘ but few believe that this has any evil influence
 ‘ upon them,’ because their faith is not well grounded in the protection of a superintending Power, who is jealous of the service, and the confidence he requires at their hands, ‘and for which
 ‘ reason the cure of the disorder is not considered
 ‘ as expedient, to relieve a weakened and bleeding
 ‘ country.’

But perhaps it may be said, that with many of these idle vanities, and fashionable fancies of higher life, we have no concern in this our *bumble*, and *retired* situation. It is in *one* sense true, my brethren, and *happy* for us we *have not*; happy that some of us have never been exposed to their temptations, and that ~~others~~ others have been convinced of their pernicious effects, and have bewailed and repented, that they *ever yielded to them*. My defence for entering on these subjects, is *this*; that as the serious business of the day, exacts a close examination of *every* failing, incident to all ranks of people, which evidently tends to displease the great Creator and Preserver of mankind, so it is necessary we should *expose* them *all*, that we may be better judges how manifold are the provocations of the land, and be led, by a serious consideration of these errors, to wean ourselves from *every dangerous habit*. But though *we* may not incur the guilt attending *these particular trespasses* of the great; still there is not a single person in this congregation (however *bumble* his lot of life may be) who is not *equally* capable by *disobedience*, and sinful defiance of the God who made, and still preserves him, to *add his* ruinous portion to the measure of the national iniquity; and to hasten that judgment, which, without a true repentance, and valuable reformation, will most assuredly overtake us in the *end*: and this we shall find has been the case with every wicked people that have had their day of trial upon earth; and whose final overthrow doth yet record a useful monument of their ingratitude, and madness.

It concerns my immediate office, and task at this time, to be most diligent in warning you from being any longer a party in producing these grievous judgments, which we have unanimously confessed this day, deservedly are due to our *numerous offences, and irreligious backslidings*. If you are truly sensible of the weighty charge that stands against you; if you are not dead in trespasses and sins; each person present, will search his own heart, and put a guard upon his lips, and watch his own steps, and turn unto the Lord his God, with weeping, and mourning, and fasting.—If we are earnestly resolved to honor God by this day's service, we shall all of us pass it in most religious reflexions of what we have heard, and prayed to be delivered from. We shall rend our hearts, and not our garments, only; that is, we shall not appear outwardly sorrowful; while we remain inwardly unaffected; but we shall shew our sincerity by the becoming behaviour of our lives; we shall be very cautious neither to give up ourselves nor encourage others, in the use of any ordinary, and (at other times,) lawful indulgences; and much less it is to be hoped, will any boldly dare to profane the day, and provoke the long suffering of God, by intemperate, or other vicious courses. And it behoves all those particularly, who are in the dangerous way of getting a livelihood by the sale of liquors, to take the greatest care of their own behaviour, and that of those who may be in their houses on this day. Were such persons duly sensible of the great importance of this day's work towards the happiness of our country, (in which we all have so much

weighty interest) they would not allow of any tippling, or idle company in their families, but would devote this opportunity of holy leisure from ordinary labors, to implore the pardon of God for their repeated, and past offences of this description. After all, it is only in the power of us, the humble Ministers of God's word, to exhort you faithfully, and most affectionately, not to be thus assisting to the terrible vengeance which seems to threaten the kingdom, and also to exert the authority given us, by the laws, to prevent the profanation of such solemn seasons, during the hours of God's public worship : but this we are bound to do, at the very peril of our souls, if when our last account is called for it shall appear we have been unfaithful in our trust, or to have paid more deference to sinful creatures, like ourselves, than to the pure and most High God of Heaven and earth.

In this place, likewise, it is incumbent upon *me*, to admonish those among you (my brethren) whose immediate office and duty it may be to protect the peace and order of the community, not to slacken in your most solemn engagements to support the honor of God's name, and service, to the *utmost of your power*. For the conscientious discharge of *your* respective posts you have most solemnly bound yourselves by OATH, desiring God only so *to help you*, in all your manifold necessities of body, and soul, as you shall prove obedient to *your* engagement ; so that in fact (my dear friends) here is a *curse* registered on earth and in Heaven against *yourselves* for every *wilful* and *unlawful* neglect of public *duty* to
which

which when you are entering office, you give your own *Amen*. This circumstance *alone*, to every *real* christian mind, must surely hold out a very awful *consequence*! You will be no less accountable than I shall, for every undue omission of your respective duties. If we favor sin, and the thoughtless disposition of our ignorant brethren, we must expect to share the punishment of *their* crimes. Nay there is reason to fear, *our* condemnation will be the *most* severe, because as far as in our power to *prevent* them, (if we do not *use* that power) we certainly are *accomplices* in the transgression; but if we act an *honest, legal*, part in striving to prevent the breach of the peace, and the dishonoring of our Maker; and men still obstinately persist to *oppose* both God, and man, *Their blood will be on their own heads, we have rescued our souls.*

It is the slender regard so many pay to the prodigious blessings of the several wholesome laws enacted to preserve the honor due to God, and to secure our temporal happiness, that the woeful visitation of anarchy, tyranny, and all violent disorder, are inflicted by the Lord upon those who abuse such happy means of the peaceable enjoyment of life and property, during this rugged journey to a better world. It is the injudicious and very faulty neglect to put just laws in execution, that paves the way to the growth of every vice, and helps the dangerous spirit of commotion in any country. When bold offenders are made an early, and a public example for their crimes, or misdemeanors, the consequence is always *happy*, both for

themselves, and the community : and it must strike every person of common sense, as no less ungrateful to Divine Providence, than extreme folly in their own conduct, lightly to value such *mighty favor*, as the *best of governments*, secured by the *most impartial laws*. By such remissness we trample under foot these manifest marks of the supreme protection, and are instrumental, by our *own* deficiency, to every evil we lament so loudly, and pray so continually, to have *averted*. It is only through the gracious permission of Divine Providence in defending the strenuous, and discrete exertions of our Rulers, that the infectious spirit of discord and insurrection, has received a *timely check*, and been prevented from spreading every possible misery in the land. Had they been indifferent about enforcing the penal laws that God has suffered to be formed for the protection of his servants, and which, in truth, preclude the absolute necessity of constant intervening miracle to preserve them *without* this general providential blessing, *very different* had been our *present* situation ; we had probably been without a *church* to pray in, or liberty to offer *any public homage* to our Heavenly Protector. The unrivalled excellence of our government would have been demolished, and supplanted by the oppressive violence, and shifting power, of unprincipled men. It is far *better*, therefore, that a few mad, turbulent spirits, should be transported out of danger of continuing *tools* to the crafty, secret enemies of our church and state, than that our Prince, and religion, lives, and fortune, should have been made a general sacrifice.

vice to an unprecedented, and cruel system. We have abundant reason, therefore, to exult at our being yet spared to enjoy this mercy, and to implore the continued favor of the *Most High*. *Kings of the earth, and all people* who have escaped the meditated ruin of their most implacable foes, cannot be too exemplary in grateful praise to the Lord Jehovah. **KINGS**, whose power God represents as an image of his own, and who may be considered as the suns of their respective systems; judges and magistrates of all kinds, who derive their power from *them*, as the planets *theirs* from the sun's original light, *they* surely, must rejoice in being protected.—We cannot too highly estimate the blessing of *dwelling together in unity*, for as the Prophet truly says, *it is the most delightful pleasant thing on earth*; and never could its worth be more conspicuous, than by comparing our present inward state of peaceful rule, with the tumultuous suffering kingdom of our enemy. The picture of a flourishing state is most elegantly described as follows, by a truly pious, and eminent author, in his comment on the above passage.

‘ *Unity* beginning in the *Prince*, and spreading
 ‘ throughout the *people*, is thus beautifully repre-
 ‘ sented by the Psalmist; kingdoms are considered
 ‘ as bodies politic, of which the King is **HEAD**,
 ‘ and the people in their several ranks, and orders,
 ‘ the *parts* and *members* of it. *Union* in a nation is
 ‘ the *gift of God*, and therefore, unity among
 ‘ brethren, beginning from their *King*, is like the
 ‘ dew of Heaven, as essential to general peace and
 happy-

‘ Happiness, as dew to refresh and moisten the produce of the earth.’

Where the word of a *King* is, there is permanent, and salutary power. Trust me, my friends; it is equally our *duty* and *interest*, to *support* that power, and not to provoke the Lord, by discontent and dissention, to withdraw that earthly shield of our defence against the horrors of rebellion, and wicked usurpation of *natural* inheritance, and *legal* rights. We may profit by the information of both profane and sacred history, as also by the woeful scenes of bloodshed and ruin, actually before us, that ‘ *civil* discord always introduced the devastation of *foreign enemies*, brought confusion into states, and dissolved their long established forms of government, ’till by the re-establishment of Royal authority, countenance and support were again renewed to all the subordinate powers who in the language of inspired writers, may be justly called the *pillars* of a country;’ and as of old the holy Prophet thus addressed the opposers of such government, and the disturbers of the public peace, *Saying unto the fools deal not so madly* (exposing the folly of exalting themselves against their Prince,) so he exhorts them for their *own* sakes, to humility, and obedience.—But while we contemplate these pleasant images of *union* and *prosperity*, we should remember, that the hydra of insurrection, is by no means CRUSHED. It only SLEEPS, under the gracious restraint of Almighty power, to try us yet a *little longer*. Should he be pleased to confound the wisdom of our senators, or to destroy their unanimity

mity in the public cause, the monster would instantly shew its ruinous front, and prey with undistinguishing and redoubled fury upon the devoted objects of its revenge.—That we may never experience so horrible a reverse of fortune, let us all look to our particular faults, and labor to repair those evil courses which are likely to involve us in the general ruin. *Let us crucify the affections and lusts*, which we are plainly told in scripture, will render it impossible for us to be admitted into God's most holy kingdom, and for which *the wrath of God is visited upon the children of disobedience*. And let us pray for grace to cultivate the opposite tempers and dispositions, which alone can prepare us for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness (where nothing impure, or that maketh a lie can possibly enter), and reconcile us to divine care during our earthly sojourning. Let us make it the chief study of this day *privately* to examine our *former* lives; *to judge ourselves*, that we be not *finally judged of the Lord*; to probe to the very bottom of our sinful hearts, and earnestly beseech the Lord, (who knoweth them better than we *ourselves*), to cleanse them from all those selfish principles, which sully our very best works, and if not eradicated, or at least subdued, will prevent our being temples for his good spirit to dwell in, and of course deprive us of ever becoming pleasing in his sight, or paying him such sacrifices as can be acceptable to Him.

But perhaps some of you may justly say within yourselves, all this is good *advice*, and highly proper to be *observed*, but how to *perform* it is the question;

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we are not able of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves. Nothing is more true, my brethren. Attend then, I beseech you, to the *only remedy* that can be offered. We must apply to HIM, who alone is both able and willing to save us from destruction. If you are effectually *convinced* of this, you have happily arrived a great way towards a *cure*. To me (says Christ) *is given all power in heaven and earth. No man can come unto the Father but through me.* In other words, it is for *his sake* that God has any mercy towards us sinful creatures. . . And it is also through the grace, or help, communicated by Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit, in consequence of his *merits*, and *mediation*; that we feel at any time at all *inclined* to come to him. It is by these cords of *love*, love of his Son, and in *him* love to us, (for whom he died,) that the Father vouchsafes to draw us to his service; this he does in numerous ways, and measures; according as his wisdom sees it likely to work upon us for our good; and his own eternal glory; which is the end of all his works of nature, and of grace. In pursuance of this grand, and merciful design, are all the *outward means* of grace proposed to us; the light and purity of the Gospel precepts, and these very forms of public humiliation, which from an humble sense of what is due to God's exalted majesty, our Sovereign recommends so solemnly, to be observed by all his Christian subjects. These public acts of self-denial you have been fully shewn, God hath ever approved of by the example of all his holy Prophets, and messengers of old, and it is proper to attribute to the influence

influence of religious principle upon the hearts of our superiors, this very necessary duty enjoined upon us; and as we can but own, we are by nature, very averse to strict and pure compliance with such a method of appeasing heaven, we must fall low before the footstool of the Most High, whom we continue daily to offend, and intreat *that* Advocate who sitteth on the right hand of his dread Majesty, to intercede for our acceptance, and to pour his grace into our *hearts*, that we may offer up a *willing*, not a *feigned* service. That he would please to change their flinty nature, and make them soft, and sorrowful. That we may in such manner *ask*, as readily to *receive* his help; so to seek, that we may surely *find* it; and to apply so *earnestly*, that a door of favor may be opened unto us, of peaceful preservation while we continue *here*, and everlasting glory when our day of trial is over. When we have once experienced that melting influence which is necessary to dissolve the hardness of our natural hearts, we then shall easily *rend* them in a *spiritual* sense, and find *fasting*, *weeping*, and *mourning*, not only a becoming, but a pleasing tribute to our Divine Redeemer. We shall then recall, with Christian faith and hope, Christ's cheering promise in St. Matthew, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*. We shall then be made so sensible of the necessity, and value of contrition, that instead of thinking it *hard to fast*, or mourn (as many I fear now do) even *once* a year, we shall feel inclined to mourn the *whole* remainder of our lives, so that our sorrow at last be changed into *joys eternal*. Such
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tears make happy those that shed them even *now*; for in truth, how can a real Christian *forbear* to mourn? It is a valuable mark of grace, my brethren, 'to feel afflicted for the wickedness of the world we live in, the many dangers that surround us, and the inexhaustible corruption of our own hearts! It is a great gift of God to feel fearful of losing his favor, and lest we should wander from the *strait* way. All genuine saints, that is, *real* Christians, have ever shed tears for this.' And if not always *actual* tears, they have experienced such *inward groanings*, or contrition of spirit, as *cannot* properly be uttered by any *outward signs*. When once we are brought to think as we *should* do, it will be difficult for us to rejoice, as long as we are in danger of losing all most dear to us, and *ourselves*, that is, our *souls* besides. How is it possible to avoid concern while nothing but *error*, *vanity*, *offences*, *ingratitude*, and disregard of Him, whom only we should love, present themselves wherever we turn! Grief surely is due to so many sad occasions of sorrow! This is a mourning *pleasing* unto God; He himself inspires it; for we can never pay it till He has touched the heart with *grateful sensibility*; and though our tears should flow as rivers of water, He in good time shall *wipe them all away*.

But let us attend as matter of further admonition, to what God's Blessed Son observes, of those who act so very *differently* from this character: *Wee unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep*; that is, they who are so thoughtless of the only
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end and value of life, as wholly to neglect their *everlasting interests*; who sport and *trifle* away their *day of trial*; they will have cause for ENDLESS grief, and lamentation. Again; *woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation*. As they valued their possessions so far, as they gratified their *own desires*, independant of any Christian application of them, *they have had their good things*; ‘yet men seek *mirth*, and *riches*, as objects valuable in *themselves*, and contributing to the essential happiness of their existence:’ and why? because they have no just relish for Christian graces. Christ also *saith, blessed are those that weep*; yet men dread nothing more than sorrow. The same cause recurs; they forget the scriptural character of their temporal state, *that in the world they shall have tribulation*. But *trials* have ever been found the lot of Christ’s approved servants, and be assured that nothing is more true; for though in the number of his Disciples there are many who are trusted with a competent share of this world’s goods, yet *those* in their heart, endure the cross of their suffering Master; *they are weary and heavy laden with the burden of their sins*. They are wounded for the foul *depravity* of their nature; and if in this life only, *they had hope in Christ, they would be of all men the most miserable*, although their outward circumstances are *easy*, or even *opulent*; for those they consider both as a *stewardship*, and an arduous *trial*, to employ with *wile*, and grateful judgment. Happy, then, my friends, those tears or sorrows which flow from *grace*, which wean us from the vain and fleeting enjoy-

enjoyments of this uncertain life, and work in us the desire of Christ's promised, rich rewards, in Heaven.

Thus have I set before you, in the fullest, and plainest manner I am able, the just causes of our present fears; the terrible consequence of their effects, should they be inflicted; the only possible means for us to *avert* them; and that it is our duty and interest to employ those means, *most faithfully*. Lastly, and above all, I have directed you how to qualify yourselves for the very *ability* of employing them to any good purpose. First, by acknowledging your own insufficiency for any thing that is good; secondly, the punishment we have all *deserved*; and thirdly, the absolute necessity of applying to Him, who alone is mighty to save from the hands of our bitterest enemies, in times of greatest danger, *and to give us a heart both to will and to do of his good pleasure*.

Afflictions, are among the choicest of God's preservations from final ruin. His warnings and corrections are instances of the purest regard, and fatherly affection. We may always judge how far they have wrought their designed effect, by the degree of our *conviction* of sin, and the sincerity of our *repentance*. All would gladly be delivered from the *punishment* of a nation; let all depart from those *transgressions* that are likely to *occasion* it. Let us take comfort in the latter portion of the text (which we must gratefully confess, we have long unworthily experienced) *That the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth*

repenteth him of the evil; and therefore, though God may suffer those who profess his holy worship to be sometimes delivered into the hands of their enemies for the chastisements of their sins, let us hope in *our case*, it is only to show us our *transgressions*, and lead us to *repentance*. When this effect is wrought, he is always ready to avenge their cause, *He repenteth Him of the evil, and averteth it*, that is, changeth his purpose of punishment, in consequence of his creatures *bumbling* themselves before Him: *He is entreated for the land, and becometh gracious unto his servants*. Therefore, being duly sensible that all redress must flow from his most *free* and tender mercy, and yet alive to that respect his High and Holy Name deserves, we humbly cry, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name, give the glory, for thy goodness, and thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the beaten say, WHERE IS NOW THEIR GOD!*

I cannot more properly conclude our present bounden sacrifice of sorrow, and supplication to the Most High; than under a becoming sign of its great and manifold imperfections, to beg God's needful pardon, and favour at the same time, and in the penitential language of the pious Psalmist, to supplicate his forbearance by this humble prayer: *O remember not against us our former iniquities, but let thy loving kindness speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name; and cleanse and deliver us from all our sins, for thy gracious mercies sake, in Jesus Christ, Amen.*

SERMON XXII.

FOR THE MORNING OF A GENERAL
FAST-DAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1795.

~~ISAIAH lvi. 1.~~
ISAIAH lviii. 1.

*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgressions, and the house
of Jacob their sins.*

MATTHEW xxiv. 15.

*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation
(spoken of by Daniel the Prophet) standing in the Holy
Place; who so readeth let him understand.*

I MEAN to speak to you this day, my brethren,
from *both* these passages of Holy Scripture. I
have fixed upon the *first* text, to shew you our
commission and authority, for the needful task of
admonition, and *exhortation*: and I have made choice
of the *other*, as a suitable portion of God's word,
to *awaken* you to a proper sense of the important
occasion of our assembling here this day. The
business is truly *urgent*, and *awful*, and it demands
a close inquiry, and most earnest attention.

First then, I shall confine myself to the task of convincing you, of the heavy charge that lieth on every *Pastor*, no less than of the incumbent duties of the *flock*, over which he is appointed overseer; that so by considering our *respective* obligations to serve our Maker, we may happily be disposed to correct our mutual errors, and neglects, and obtain grace to walk in such a manner, that *whether we live, we may live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we may die unto the Lord.*

If you turn to the 3d chapter of Ezekiel, 17th verse, you will there see the peculiar command given to the ministers of God's word, to be most faithful in this part of their sacred office. *Son of man, I have made thee a WATCHMAN to the house of Israel, therefore bear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. For* (saith the Lord again by the word of the same Prophet, xxxiii. 7.) *if the watchman see the sword come, and take away any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the WATCHMAN's hands.* Nothing can be more expressive of the character of a minister of God's word, than this figure, of a WATCHMAN. You all know his *business* is to guard against accidents befalling those who slumber, or sleep; who repose in his vigilance, trusting that he will point out any danger as soon as he apprehends it is at hand. There is *another* strong passage in the Old Testament which you will find in the 20th chapter of this same book; and which will powerfully prove to you the *necessity* that is laid upon us to be most *sincere, diligent, and earnest* in our conduct in this respect;

respect, towards all committed to our care: *And thou, son of man, shall speak my words to them, whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear.* And is it not alarming, my brethren, to consider what these words *imparted*: no less than, LAMENTATION; MOURNING; and WOE. I will only mention two passages from the New Testament to confirm the same bounden duty on *our* part, and then proceed to the main subject of my intended exhortation on this particular occasion. St. Paul, in his 2d. Epistle to Timothy, excites his disciples *to be constant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering, and doctrine*, that is, bearing with the utmost *dulness, perverseness, and thoughtlessness*, of particular persons, and striving to awaken and convert them, by every *possible* plea, that the *word* of God contains. And in the former parts of the chapter he sets out with accounting for the *necessity* of such circumspection; for this reason (says he) you are to do it; *that in the last days perilous times shall come.* Farther, in Acts xx. 28. he thus anxiously recommends the same duty in these most interesting words. *Take heed therefore to YOURSELVES, and to ALL the FLOCK, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood.* In these texts are contained abundant testimony of the vast expediency of this duty towards *you*; of *our* full authority to exercise it *strictly*; and of the danger to *both* our souls if we neglect it.

From the passages just now repeated to you, we have an exact description of the dangers that

threaten our country, and which we are met this day to supplicate the Almighty to *avert* from us. *In the last days perilous times will come.* In truth, they seem to be nearly at our door, and the natural consequence (should God permit the scourge to reach us) must be LAMENTATION, MOURNING, and WOE in the *extreme*.

Having upon former occasions of the like nature with the present, most minutely detailed the history of all public acts of abstinence, and humiliation, and at the same time explained to you, the various *causes* which have provoked the Lord to threaten and punish the nations of old, I shall now cut the matter very short, by pronouncing it *once*, that such visitations, ever were, and ever *must* be im- to the prevailing sinfulness of the people.

We have an awakening authority in Holy Writ, that among the many chastisements that the transgressions of different nations have drawn down from Heaven, the most dreadful have always been those which have reached the CHURCH; and for a very obvious *reason*; because *that* being the fountain whence all instruction and good can be expected, that God is pleased to bestow upon his creatures, and the secondary means of training them for his service both *here*, and *hereafter*; if *that* stream becomes corrupted, or ceases to flow in those channels which will readily convey refreshment to them, who seek the pure water-springs of truth, and holiness, the influence must become fatal in course of time. And when we see whole churches destroyed, in a manner on a *sudden*, what can we conclude

conclude, but that they were essentially deficient in principle or practice, and ripe for destruction. Thus we read of what befel the early Christian churches, which had *forsaken their first works*; they previously were most graciously exhorted to *repent*, but they took not the Divine counsel; and as some were condemned for their foul *apostacy*, so others were equally rejected of God for their *lukewarmness*, and indifference. *He, therefore, that hath ears* (saith the holy Revelation) *will do well to hear what the Spirit hath said to the churches of old*; and for the woeful account of which, I refer you to the 2d chapter of the book of Revelations.

In the utter desolation that hath been permitted of late to overtake the whole church of a mighty kingdom, we have an immediate, and thorough warning to look to our *own* fate. I shall not presume to enter into an account of the peculiar errors of that particular church, or the trespasses of her members, but only suggest those things which seem most to infect our *own*; and which, by the solemnity of the Divine Revelation above alluded to, promises a fearful rejection, if speedy care is not employed to conciliate the Divine favour; for this is the *sign* and *sentence* which seem to suit our own declining state, *Because thou art lukewarm* (saith God, in the *strongest language of contempt*) *I will utterly cast thee off, and forsake thee*.

Happily, we are yet blessed with a church that emits the light in *purity*: but alas! how many are there, who wilfully shut their eyes against it. In *our* sense, we may truly say of *her*, *we are rich, and*

increased with goods, and have need of nothing : but withal we must confess, that in consequence of not employing the blessing, we are truly wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, as though we had it not. That is, considering our most sinful neglect of the means of grace, and our being lukewarm, or indifferent, to such prodigious benefits.

For every infirmity, and delinquency of his creatures, the Almighty in the boundless riches of his mercy, holds out a kind and sovereign *remedy*, and that is REPENTANCE. *Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.* But even *this* is the gift of God, and the previous condition of obtaining it, in perfect purity, and to good purpose, is to do all in our *power* to possess it, by humble and hearty *confession* of our transgression, and provocation of the Most High. To this immediate task we are expressly called, my brethren, by the solemn service of this day. And that the work may therefore take due effect upon us, it will be highly profitable that we should come to some earnest examination of *ourselves*, and resolve, with God's help, to put away the sins that *do most easily beset us*.

Now, as an exercise of suitable humiliation at this season, and to convince you that we are making hasty strides to universal ruin, it may help your spiritual interests to take a fair view of some of the most *leading, daring, and prevailing* vices for which we are *notorious*, as a nation ; and which, if
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not repented of, and reformed, will as surely subject us, to God's heavy displeasure and punishment, as it has done other offending people, in all ages of the world.

These I shall not divide into separate classes of *public*, and *private* sins, because as the community is composed of *individuals*, by exposing the *former*, the latter will naturally be brought home to each particular person, who is unhappily addicted to them: but at the same time, as I go on I shall take the opportunity of making such immediate *application* as I think most nearly concerns our *own place*, and *persons*. In so doing, the consciences of all who hear me, will prove competent to judge of their *own share* in the mischief, and be better able to determine whether there is not real reason to be *alarmed*; (not for what the *arm of flesh* can do *alone* to hurt us) but lest the vengeance of the Almighty should employ as an instrument the *force* and *enmity* of a wicked, and powerful people to punish our ingratitude, and humble us in the dust, according to the variety of his fore threatenings and judgments recorded in his holy word. And for this *cause* (as He speaks Himself, by the mouth of his Prophet,) *that we have moved Him to jealousy with that which is not God, provoking Him to anger with our vanities, therefore will He move us to jealousy with them that are not a people*, (that is, a profane, vicious, unbelieving race;) and as his own word declares, *provoke us to anger with a foolish nation*. This is the WARNING, and here follows the JUDGMENT: *The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young*

young man and the virgin; the suckling also with the man of grey hairs, Deut. xxxii. 21, 25. After which, as if lamenting the miseries of his graceless people, and desirous that they should escape the calamities and horrors of intestine war, the Lord expresses Himself in this tender strain of patient commiseration: O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end, (that is, so live that they might be fit to die) then would they be led to put their trust really in the Lord their rock of defence. Then how should one chase a thousand, and ten put ten thousand to flight; except their rock had sold them, and their Lord had shut them up? By all this we are taught the battle is not always to the strong, but that victory depends upon the will of heaven. In this humble confidence, and the hope that God will protect and save us, we now approach the throne of mercy, with fasting, mourning, and prayer, supplicating Him to avert the evils we have so justly deserved.

But to shew that we are *sincere* in this confession, let us now proceed to reflect upon the weight of punishment that is due to the many enormous transgressions of the people. And first I beg you to judge of that most impious and shocking custom of profaning the *name* of the Most High. This sin doth daily *increase* amongst us; to the disgrace of our religious professions; all ages, all ranks of men, are more or less addicted to it. Even infants *kiss* out oaths and curses, and in this respect may be truly said, *to go astray from the womb*. Among those whose advantages of every kind might render

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decent example at least to be expected, we frequently experience the most shameful, and shameless trespass in this article. Magistrates, who by their office are hourly liable (in compliance with the wholesome laws of the land) to *punish* their *inferiors* for this breach of veneration for the Deity, are too often guilty of the foul offence *themselves*, against which the laws of God and man are so expressly and justly levelled. Nay, it is a truth too notorious to be denied, that even *females*, and the *sacred* character, whose very *presence*, in *former days*, was sufficient to check this *heathenish* habit; even *they* are not exempt from the contagion of this vile practice. At the same time all know, and subscribe in prayer, to the express command forbidding this foul crime. With their *lips* they cry, *Incline our hearts, O Lord, to keep thy law; and have mercy on our failings; and return immediately with their lips to sin.* Thus making good the Psalmist's words, *Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing.* The worship of such, is manifestly *mockery*, and only helps to aggravate their guilt, and harden them from repenting; for *the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.* To impress your minds with the atrociousness of the act, and the hatefulness of it in the sight of God; attend to a few passages of holy writ which speak directly to the present subject. For *because of SWEARING, the land mourneth* (saith the Prophet Jeremiah, xxiii. 10.) *and their course is evil, and their force is not right,* (that is, both their councils and their projects shall not prosper) for *both prophet and priest are profane, they*
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in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord.) Again, He declareth by his servant Hosea, that he hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is *neither truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; for by SWEARING, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out,* (that is, they defile their souls and forfeit all pretensions to be God's servants.) And what follows declare God's *private* curse upon the persons so offending. *As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; let it come into his bowels like water, and into his bones like oil. Let it be as a garment that covereth him, and as a girdle wherewith he is continually girded.* (Ps. cix.) And on account of the great finfulness of this practice, our Blessed Lord enjoineth his disciples not to be guilty of any manner of swearing in common discourse. *Swear not at all.* Make use of no rash or vain oaths; much less dare to dishonor that Holy Name, at which the *earth trembles, and the heavens do bow.* And hence I would take occasion, my brethren, to admonish you against the use of this most Blessed Name *at all*, but in the solemn exercises of *prayer.* We have an example of one of the most eminent characters of *this*, or any *other* country for *learning, and exalted virtues,* who never uttered the name of the Most High, but with a pointed *pause* before it. How different is the common practice of the thoughtless Christian! At almost every word, and on the most insignificant occasions, *God, and Lord,* escape the lips of the *graceless* multitude, who inconsiderately blaspheme the sacred Majesty of Heaven. Your children and depend-

dependants follow your *example*, and from their earliest years, instead of learning *reverence* to the name of the SUPREME, they become hardened in the impious habit of *taking his name in vain*. I shall conclude this head, with submitting to *yourselves*, if it is judged by Jehovah himself to be *using his name vainly*, when even in our *devotions*, we are not duly thoughtful of that holy business, how heavy must be the sin of prostituting it continually, upon the most trifling subjects, and without any concern for the transgression? The ignorant, and dead in trespasses and sins, may foolishly suggest, that the *intention* principally makes the *crime*; to which the answer is as ready, as *convictive*, viz. that the commandment against it, is too plain to be mistaken by any *rational being*; and that the impiety of the habit, doth as plainly shew that there is *no intention* to *observe* it.

Allied to this, is that still (if possible) more iniquitous sin of *perjury*, or *false swearing*, which adds *defiance* to *contempt* of God's High Name; a crime by far more general than people are aware of, and equally reprobated in the book of Life, as calculated to provoke the vengeance of the Almighty. For thus the Lord speaks by his Prophet Malachi (iii. 5.) *I will be a swift witness against the false swearers, who swear by the Lord, but not in truth*. And this is the peculiar curse attending it, as denounced in Zechariah, v. 3, 4. *Every one that sweareth shall be cut off, and the curse shall enter into his house who SWEARETH FALSELY by my name. For you shall not swear by my name falsely, (saith the Lord)* Levit. xix.

12. But how regardless are many of all these laws, and threatenings, strict, and dreadful as they are? Where is there a public officer to be found, that is not perjured, in *some degree*, in the sight of an *all-pure God*, and his *own conscience*? What a depth of iniquity of *this kind*, is carried on in all the Courts of Law by men who have not the fear of God before their eyes? Compute the prodigiously growing burthen of this damning offence for *ages*, and by *millions* of transgressors in the land, and then *judge* if God is not *slow to anger*, and whether *He is extreme to mark what is done amiss*? But though *He is long-suffering, and of great goodness*, we must not suppose that he will *never* visit us for these things; you hear, that He has declared the *contrary*; and it is our duty and interest, to reform in time, and strive to avert the dreaded judgment. The longer He in mercy has borne with our provocations, the *heavier* will be the chastisement if we do not *repent*, and amend our ways. And it must be evident, to every man of *common* understanding, that in proportion as any of us are addicted to these sins, we do not only provoke God to visit us with various domestic calamities, as *sickness*, loss of *friends*, of *property*, or *fortune*, but we contribute, with other offenders, to the impending evils that await a sinful, and impenitent nation.

The next enormous sin that presents itself for our consideration, is the scandalous profanation of the LORD'S DAY. The universal breach of the fourth commandment is a matter of just complaint, and concern, to every pious Christian. It is a reproach

preach to the manners, and religion of our country; and if not reformed, will ultimately bring a *curse* upon it. This *single* trespass is enough, if *persisted* in, to subject the nation to the severest marks of the Divine displeasure. *Hallow my sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me, and thee,* saith the Lord. Only visit the house of the great, in *general*, in the metropolis, at the hours of public worship, and then judge what *sign* there is of this connection between the Creator, and his creatures. *Signs* of every thing most *opposite* to the holy business of the day may be discovered in themselves and families, instead of signs of *holy rest*. Preparation for feasting, visiting, and journeying, but few, (comparatively with the number of thoughtless Sabbath-breakers) in *preparation* for the *service of God's house*. The traffic of the world, in various public, and disgraceful instances, goes on the *same*, as on the common days of busied labor, contrary to positive law; to the spirit of royal proclamation, and every precedent of *decency*, and *piety*; and this would never be the case but for the ungracious indifference of those in authority, towards holy things. Nay, if you visit the *churches*, even *there*, we shall behold the generality more occupied with their *own* persons, or their *neighbor's dress*; with impertinent *inquiries*, and heedless *deportment*, than in a *wary, humble* demeanor, or fervor of devotion. As great improprieties (I am sorrow to observe) are often to be seen, even in *country* congregations, where, in truth, through freedom of infection from higher, and more licentious example,

example, less vitiated manners might be expected, and marks of genuine piety *more frequent*. But the *cause* of indevotion is the same in ALL, and EVERY WHERE. Want of ~~strict~~ religious *consideration*, originates in want of *grace*, and want of grace, is a deficiency of *pure desire* to attain it. For example, what can be more preposterous, or foreign to the very nature of all religious profession, than an habitual practice of *sleeping in the house of God*. To satisfy yourselves at once, of the horrible indecency of such stupid negligence, only ingenuously confess what judgment you would pass upon a person, who under a ruinous state of worldly circumstances, being invited to a public conference upon the most important interests of himself and family, should be so lost to decency and propriety, as to *compose himself to sleep*, almost as soon as the concerns of his disordered affairs were opened? Such a person surely, could not be supposed to have any *real interest* in the *proceedings*, and much less to *deserve benefit* from their *decision*. The only apology for such extraordinary behaviour, even among *men*, would be the influence of *bodily malady*, it being almost impossible to find an instance of such rudeness or imbecillity in the ordinary course of our conduct towards each other. But when we consider WHOM we slight, and *what* we *lose*, by such unpardonable remissness under *that* roof, where the *Savior of mankind*, the *eternal word*, declares *He ever is present*; and his Holy Angels waiting to *record* our prayers and praises: it should make men shudder to be guilty of such repeated errors, and
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wilfully to yield to such profane indulgence. I shall close this instance of most unchristian conduct with the rebuke of the Apostle on *another* occasion, who applies this deserved reproach to the offender: *What, have ye not HOUSES to eat and drink in?* which accusation may equally apply to those, who when at *church*, are more inclined to *sleep*, than *pray*.

There is another unholy practice to which some are given, and which, though happily not so frequent, is no less irreverent, and thoughtless in the extreme, and that is when people abruptly leave the congregation in the middle of the service on being sent for by relations or acquaintances. Nothing can exceed the grossness of this affront to *God*. Nothing but *life* and *death*, or the sudden illness of a friend, can possibly excuse such monstrous violation of all religious order. To see it in its proper, and truly disgusting light, only make the custom of the *world*, again the rule of *measuring* the offence. Now were you regularly invited to the feast of a superior, and in the midst of his choice provisions for your entertainment, you were suddenly to start up, (disturb the company, with the conjecture at such gross behaviour) and leave the room in preference of some idle, insignificant employment, what opinion, think you, would be passed upon such *strange* insulting conduct? Such a guest, I apprehend, would hardly be *asked again*. Whereas the dread Lord of Heaven and earth, although so rudely, and ungratefully insulted, still bears with the repeated provocation; invites afresh the un-

worthy transgressor,—warns him to consider, and repent, and affords him time to correct his errors, and repair his foul ingratitude. Surely such boundless mercy should both *shame* and *soften* men's ungodly manners. If your connections have no more grace than to violate the Sabbath at *home*, nor to take advantage of an opportunity of, in *some* degree, *repairing* their offence by serving God *abroad*, let them wait, 'till your own just homage is discharged, and then, *reprove* them seriously for their woeful want of thought; let not *their* impiety contaminate *your* behaviour, but reproach them in the language of the Apostle; *Whether it be right in the sight of God, to attend unto men more than unto God, judge ye?* (Acts iv. 15.) If mere worldly business is the cause of such interruption, the sin is aggravated by *doubly* breaking the Lord's commandments; and *chastisement*, not *success*, must finally be expected on such misconduct. If people were resolute in Joshua's determination, *that they and their house should serve the Lord*, their acquaintance would not hazard a visit, that they knew would be unwelcome, and you would be in some measure instrumental to preventing *their* abusing the Sabbath Day. O! did we but consider duly, what it is to live to all *eternity*, in *happiness*, or *misery*, inconceivable, we should not so lightly regard the *means* of obtaining *one*, and avoiding the *other*. It is impossible to pay too much respect to the Lord's Day. Without it, we can lay no just claim to any vital religion. It is the foundation, and nurse of all our *growth in piety*. For this reason also, you cannot be too careful

careful in training your *children*, and *dependants* to an exact observance of its public duties, and private respect for its holy appointment. In their catechism you ask them, year after year, this easy, useful question, *Is playing on the Sabbath day, consistent with keeping it holy?* Yet alas! how few are at all concerned in what manner their careless offspring pass this holy day? They should never be suffered to indulge their usual innocent sports upon the Sabbath day; you should keep them in your sight as much as possible; employ them at their books, hear them their catechism, and *prayers*, talk to them of *serious* things; teach them short, and easy hymns, and lessons; keep them at home, and send them rather earlier to rest, than on a common day. By this method *they will remember their Creator in the days of their youth*. They will grow up an honour and happiness to *yourselves*, and you will be blest by them when you meet *the enemy together in the gate*. On the contrary, by not *training them up in the way they should go*, (in *this* respect *especially*), they will most likely become a burden, or disgrace to you *here*, will forfeit the protection and blessing of Heaven, and should you meet in endless darkness, they will *add* to your *eternal* torment, in the mutual, but unavailing wish, THAT THEY HAD NEVER BEEN BORN.

So alarming has been the increasing evil of dishonoring God's Sabbath, that a few year's back, God put it into the hearts of some considerate christians, in different places, to endeavor to *check* the dreaded anger of the Almighty in consequence

of this general profanation, by establishing *Sunday schools*, whereby provision might be made in future time, for more respect to this most holy day. Great has been the success, and benefit, in various parts of the kingdom, of these most pious and awful institutions. Being founded solely on a principle of honouring God's name, they *must* succeed. Where proper masters and mistresses can be procured, who have a religious conscientiousness of their duty in the business, much valuable knowledge may be obtained in course of time by such provision. But if nothing *else* is learnt, a habit of venerating the Sabbath from their earliest years; of being prevented from idleness, and mischief on that sacred day; is sure to be effected: and where *less* benefit is derived, than the design is calculated to produce, it is greatly owing to the inattention of those, whose positive duty it is, as members of the community, to support, inspect, and regulate these nurseries of piety and good order. It is the *parent's* express concern, and interest, that their children should *never miss* attending; and woe be to all who discourage or neglect such happy opportunities of promoting good! But how hard is it to persuade *some* of the necessity and value of these restraints on vice, and the benefits to be expected from an advancement in religious duties! Perhaps you would hardly believe it, unless the authority come from *this place*, but I have good grounds for the truth of the assertion; that in a parish, which you all *well know*, for the character it has, of charitable assistance from *others*; even in *such* a place, where

the parishioners experience so general an *advantage*, the Minister had not influence to raise a contribution of *three farthings* per week each among the most substantial farmers*, though he has supplicated it for *years*, and used every possible argument and method to persuade them of the *expediency* and *value* of the work. How can any people expect favor from Heaven, while trespassing in so many grievous instances, and continuing dead to the means of encouraging *veneration to the sabbath*, and the honor due to our *Divine Benefactor*! Surely, wherever such ungrateful indifference exists, there is mournful cause to take up the language of the text; *To cry aloud and spare not*.

Permit me to remind you, my brethren, of *another* great irregularity and very serious failing, that too generally prevails amongst us in the course of God's solemn service. I mean the late attendance of many on the worship of their Maker. I need use but few words to convince you of the great indecency of this practice; you must be equally sensible also, that thereby you lose the benefit of the most incumbent and valuable part of the holy service of

* This was intended as a *professional rebuke* to part of the congregation, who had actually been deficient in this *very article*. To mention *all* the circumstances that would aggravate this exceptionable conduct, might be *improper*; and what rendered it more *extraordinary*, was the general good character of the farmers, and their readiness on *other* occasions to attend to their Minister's proposals; for though some were perfectly sensible of the *propriety* and *use* of the institution, and spoke highly in its *favor*, none could be convinced of the grace and happiness of being *first* in a good cause, and, for want of a good *example*, *all* declined.

the church, the *joint confession* of your sins, in communion with your fellow Christians; God's promise of their pardon by the mouth of his Minister; besides the certain, and vexatious consequences to every devout Christian, of being disturbed in their prayers and praises to their Divine Protector. I do most earnestly exhort, and affectionately entreat you, my dear friends, to weigh the extreme impropriety and offence of such a habit, and labor to correct it. For the comfort of *some* who hear me, you have *their* becoming example of a very different practice, by their timely attendance before the service begins. Surely people do not *think at all*, or they *must* be sensible of the *absurdity*, as well as *guilt* of such remissness in holy things. Wisdom and duty should direct us, that on the contrary we should rather be *earlier* in God's house, than after his worship is commenced; for who can be too well prepared to meet the presence of the Deity? And how, in hurry and confusion, can the mind be equal to its becoming *composure*, and *reverence* of godly adoration? If unhappily any of you are not duly sensible of the disrespect of such behaviour towards the dread Majesty of Heaven and Earth; let me once more recommend to you to try the grossness of a similar treatment even of our *worldly* superiors. None among you can be so wholly ignorant as not to know, that nothing argues more contempt even of *man's* authority, and natural right to certain marks of honor, than to come to an entertainment when it is *half over*; or to disturb a serious conversation by *noise*, or any unmannerly *interruption*; but O!
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where is the proportion between the reverence due to HIM, who *made* and *bought* us, the infinite Majesty of Heaven, at whose voice all nature trembles, and obeys, and the ordinary homage paid to *sinful dust and ashes* ! Would that I could impress all who thus offend, with a just sense both of the error, and guilt of such proceedings ! But *I* can only point them out; *I* am loaded with infirmities and failings as well as *others*; and God alone, (whose honor I would excite you to exalt) must be applied to if you wish to *change*: and as *one* stage towards that blessing, I shall close this portion of my discourse, and this particular head of it, with suggesting an improvement in the manner of the devotions of many which I am confident would *assist* the spirit of our religious addresses; which is far more becoming the condition of dependant, sinful creatures, and consequently must be better pleasing to the dread Sovereign of all nature; I mean the posture of KNEELING, instead of *standing*, or *sitting*, while in humble supplication for grace, and pardon, at the hands of the Almighty. I do not mention the omission of this, as a matter of *positive criminality* (for the *heart* is the seat of prayer,) but would only affectionately intimate the evident, and far greater propriety of the more *submissive* attitude. . And as all men like a *reason* for what is proposed to them, I will beg your attention to a few short remarks upon this article, supported by scripture.

First; it must be obvious, that there cannot possibly be any good argument advanced why *women* should submit to this more becoming posture in their

prayers to God, than *our sex*. Are we not all equally indebted for his mercies, and in need of his forgiveness? Why then this distinction in the mode of approaching our heavenly Benefactor? It can only be accounted for, by *custom*; and that commencing from early years, and want of due religious training; but when we come to years of understanding, *humility*, *piety*, and *gratitude*, should triumph over every indevout, or unbecoming habit. When we petition our lawful Sovereign for any favor; in testimony of our subjection, and respect, we approach his presence with a *bended knee*; and shall we refuse to fall low before the footstool of *Almighty grace*? Every man of common sense must see the *stronger* reason of humbling ourselves before the KING of *Kings*. Nay the very extraordinary *appearance*, in the *congregation*, sufficiently declares the impropriety of not employing an *uniformity* of *posture* in divine worship; for, to see *some*, on their *knees*; more *erect*; and *part* in the most disdainful, and irreverent attitude, during the most humble protestation of our general unworthiness, and the most solemn intreaties for divine assistance, it should seem as though *all* were not *equally* *sorry* for their sins, and desirous of the needful help: that some had not so much occasion as *others* to express such signs of humiliation and respect. Still it may be said, *this* is *man's* weak judgment only. In order therefore that you may want no argument to establish the *propriety* of the observation, and to convince you that *kneeling* at our devotion is the most decent, and requisite attitude of *Christians* to employ, I shall
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beg your attention to the following authorities from God's own word. The very *first*, indeed, includes the *whole*; for in Luke xxii. 41, we have an example, that implies COMMAND; *JESUS kneeled down and prayed.* In his office of man's *representative*, He thus approaches His Father, and our Father, HIS God, and our God. Hear the SUPREME HIMSELF, (Isaiah xlv. 23.) *I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me, every KNEE shall bow.* It hath ever been the posture of God's most faithful servants in their devotion, since He first revealed himself to man: we read of Daniel, *That he kneeled on his knees three times a day and prayed.* Nay we are enjoined by the express order and rubric of our church, to address the Almighty Lord of Heaven and Earth, *meekly kneeling on our knees*; according to the pious practice and exhortation of the Psalmist, *O come let us fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.* For this cause, (says the Apostle,) *I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; and much more as *Christians*, are we bound to testify this mark of adoration to the Holy Trinity; for as our religion teaches us that we can approach the Majesty on High, but only through the mediation of his beloved Son, our advocate in Heaven, so now, being seated on the right hand of his Father, and having all authority, and rule, and power, it behoves us to conform to the Apostle's injunction, and confess in *action*, as well as *words*, *That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every*

every tongue should confess that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I could wish, therefore, my dear friends, that you would lay this valuable and affectionate advice to heart; and depend upon it, in complying with the holy lesson I have delivered to you on the subject, you will find the benefit to your own souls both *now*, and when your day of trial is *past*: when in heaven, to all eternity, your employment and happiness will in great measure consist, of the most *bumble* and willing adorations of that gracious glorious Being, that hath created and redeemed you; where, with the four and twenty elders, and the whole heavenly host, you shall be induced, in grateful wonder at your deliverance, to *fall down and worship before the throne, and before the Lamb, crying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

I have but one more article to mention as more *particularly* relative to the business of this day, and with which I shall finish my discourse at present. It hath been noticed in the public prints, and with much Christian judgment, that at a time of such universal apprehension for the safety of the kingdom, it would afford a sacrifice of sweet smelling favour to the Almighty, did every pious family adopt the custom, at a settled hour, either of morning, night, or *both*, to put up a short, humble, and earnest supplication for God's blessing on our arms, and for deliverance from our enemies. Such a mark of humble confidence, in God's power and goodness, could not fail to have an happy effect.

effect. At all events, it would support, and strengthen our *own faith*, and fit us to meet the divine decrees, with suitable gratitude, or pure submission. The recording Angel, will with joy deliver in such a becoming tribute of national contrition, and becoming trust in God's mercy; and while permitted to repose securely in the bosom of our family, we should enjoy the consciousness of having *done our duty*. No form, on this occasion, can be more proper, than that employed by us in the *public worship*; it is concise, plain, and scriptural. This practice, therefore, I would likewise recommend to all who seriously think upon the hazardous condition of the *times*.

To conclude. Take heed, my brethren, I beseech you, that you make not a mere *formal* business of this day's engagement. If the offering is universally sincere, and fruit attends our serious, *general* professions, good to the land will certainly accrue; and even as far as the humiliation is *individually* pure, the blessing will be visited upon our *own souls*. But if you consider it only as *man's* ordinance, and neglect the important, holy design, of this day's service, it will then only add to our former sins and provocations, both of a public, and private nature, and we shall have nothing to expect, but speedy, just, and heavy punishment. As a *proof* of this, and to leave a due impression on your minds, of a consequence so truly dreadful, take God's own words upon the subject, and meditate upon them in your *hearts*, at home. *Do they provoke me to anger* (saith the Lord?) *Do they not thereby*
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destroy themselves, to the confusion of their own faces? Thus again, God upbraideth the whole of a merely outward service. Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination to me, (meaning the mere flattering service of the lips.) The calling of assemblies I cannot put up with, (that is, such days as these, when they are unduly kept.) It is iniquity even the solemn meeting; that is, the more solemn the pretensions, if void of genuine repentance, and resolution to amend, the greater the offence in the sight of infinite purity. Wherefore when any people persist in such dangerous mockery, God most justly exclaims, as follows, Shall I not visit for these things? And shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as this? Thus also He accounts for his several judgments. Your iniquities have turned away all good things, and your sins have withbolden them from you. He then in mercy, directs to the CURE. Ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, bearken to the sound of the trumpet, but ye would not bearken, therefore bear ye nations, and know ye congregations that are among them, that I will bring evil upon this people, the fathers and sons together, the neighbor and his friend shall perish. Even the husband and wife shall be taken, and I will pour out my fury upon the very children, and their houses and their fields, and their wives will I give unto others. I will stretch out my hand on the inhabitants of the land, and raise up a great nation against them, who are cruel, and have no mercy. O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow in ashes, and

and make thee mourning as for an only son; most bitter lamentation, for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon you.

We are here told, my brethren, what we must *do*, and what we must *avoid*, if we would escape these terrible judgments of the Lord; and also what we must expect, if disobedience and rebellion mark our conduct. That we may have grace to profit by the awful warning, and to consult in *time*, the things belonging to our *peace*, God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all praise and adoration for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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mity in the public cause, the monster would instantly shew its ruinous front, and prey with undistinguishing and redoubled fury upon the devoted objects of its revenge.—That we may never experience so horrible a reverse of fortune, let us all look to our particular faults, and labor to repair those evil courses which are likely to involve us in the general ruin. *Let us crucify the affections and lusts*, which we are plainly told in scripture, will render it impossible for us to be admitted into God's most holy kingdom, and for which *the wrath of God is visited upon the children of disobedience*. And let us pray for grace to cultivate the opposite tempers and dispositions, which alone can prepare us for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness (where nothing impure, or that maketh a lie can possibly enter), and reconcile us to divine care during our earthly sojourning. Let us make it the chief study of this day *privately* to examine our *former* lives; *to judge ourselves*, that we be not *finally judged of the Lord*; to probe to the very bottom of our sinful hearts, and earnestly beseech the Lord, (who knoweth them better than we *ourselves*), to cleanse them from all those selfish principles, which sully our very best works, and if not eradicated, or at least subdued, will prevent our being temples for his good spirit to dwell in, and of course deprive us of ever becoming pleasing in his sight, or paying him such sacrifices as can be acceptable to Him.

But perhaps some of you may justly say within yourselves, all this is good *advice*, and highly proper to be *observed*, but how to *perform* it is the question;

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service of the Almighty was happily used to be celebrated, we shall see nothing but confusion, and impieties transacted, as is most fatally, and fully come to pass in a neighbouring kingdom (an awful warning to all around them) *THEN who so readeth let him understand*; that is, it is high time for us to begin to consider the import of these several warnings in the divine oracles; to fly to the throne of mercy; to cast off all our sins; to weep and mourn for our past offences and provocations, and *to turn unto the Lord in earnest, with the whole heart, soul, mind, and strength*; lest it happen to us, as it hath done to other nations of old, according to the further prophetic intimation of the same Daniel, in chap. xi. ver. 30. who speaks as follows, of the enemies that were to punish the people of the Jews; *They shall come*, says he, *and have intelligence with those that forsake the holy covenant*; that is, they shall join with all those profane and wicked inhabitants of the land, that are ripe for insurrection, and the ruin of their country, *and arms shall stand on their part* (that is, they shall be found in mighty force of battle) *and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice* (that is, overturn the religion of their forefathers, profane its ceremonies, dishonour its hallowed courts and temples, and dispossess its ministers) *and they shall place the abomination which makes the desolation*, (that is, they shall erect their own vain standards, under which they have fought, and brought about the dreaded misery.) This is a brief and clear sense
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of the prophecy. The Lord avert it from being *our* fate!

Our essential business then at this time, my brethren, is to endeavour how we may *escape* it, and to that end, to enquire further into the *causes* that may produce it. That it is apprehended, we may be certain; or such frequent, serious, and *especial* forms of supplication to the throne of grace, to save us from our foes, would never have been enjoined us. Such penitent confessions, as to our *deserts*, would not be *necessary*, nor would such vast, unusual preparations of internal national defence, be every where *collecting*, unless the events were probable, and the danger great.

The temper, then, my friends, in which we should observe the very interesting business of this day, would be to consider most *seriously*, that it is by no means impossible, but that it will be the last religious fast; the last act of *joint* humiliation we shall ever have opportunity to employ: the last effort God will vouchsafe to allow us, to make our peace with his offended Majesty, and to engage Him to avert the judgments we have so long, and justly merited. O! if every person in the nation, were to pass this day in *such* a spirit of sorrowful dread of what may befall them, what *valuable* hope might be encouraged, that the Lord, who is *slow to anger, and of great goodness, would repent Him of the evil*, that his justice otherwise may have in store for us, and overwhelm our inveterate adversaries, as he did of old, the enemies of his chosen people. *Then*, as He speaks by the mouth of his servant

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Moses, *one should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight*. And verily, unless the *Lord be on our side*, so numerous are the hosts with which we have to conflict, that in the common course of things, it is morally impossible to subdue them, for they exceed us (at present at least) in stores, and every instrument of war, no less than *numbers*. For what is MONEY (in which perhaps we are superior) without the *other* means, which money cannot always produce? Nay, what in truth is *all the world*, if the Lord will no longer go out with our armies. But alas! it is to be feared, instead of cherishing *such* a temper, many will remain so blind to the *possibility* of these alarming events, and so deaf to the methods proposed to keep them from us, that they will hardly vouchsafe to attend to the appointed *forms*, and *ordinances*, to prepare us for an humble, and suitable supplication for our *deliverance*. But still, even where a *different* conduct is punctually observed, it is my duty to assure you, that let the day be ever so strictly kept, in point of *outward* compliance; if we are not resolved to besiege the throne of grace to help us to subdue our manifold *sins*, to quicken and qualify our *repentance*, and to enable us to live hereafter more to the glory of God, than we hitherto have done; more like the faithful servants of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and more productive of the genuine fruits of his most Holy Spirit; the whole service will prove but a solemn mockery, and a terrible aggravation of our former demerits.

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Now as this, my brethren, will most indisputably be the case, I shall proceed to enumerate a few general vices of the most flagitious kind, and which are mentioned in holy writ, as those, which more especially provoke the Deity to punish his perverse and dissolute creatures, and determine Him, in course of time, to *cut short, and make an end of all upon the earth*, who daringly continue to add sin to sin.

The only portion of the long and black catalogue, which I shall instance on this occasion, are two of a very foul, and damning nature, ADULTERY, and INGRATITUDE. The first is most highly offensive to the Almighty, as it so *effectually* pollutes society, and estranges the perpetrators of it from all inclination to godliness. The other is the original sin of Satan, which changes us completely into *children of darkness*; and which, in proportion as we slight the purposes of these solemn acts of public penance, or abuse the mercies that may follow on God's blessing of the petition of his *faithful servants*, will render us objects of abhorrence to every grateful Christian, and subjects of merited punishment, in the sight of our heavenly Judge. Of this *latter* crime I shall speak more particularly, in its proper place.

I have endeavoured to instruct and establish you in this truth; my friends, that it is for the heinous and unreformed sins of every nation, that the Lord poureth out the phials of his anger upon the heads of the ungodly, upon the people that have forsaken his covenant. Such heavy judgments as are now

in the world can be attributed to no other cause. Now amongst the most odious, and infectious of impure vices, that of *adultery* stands the foremost. It was so abominable in the sight of the Lord, that by his *first* laws, given to his people of old, both the *adulterer*, and *adulteress*, were *immediately* put *to death*; and against all such offenders He declares, *that He will be a swift witness*, that is, that he will most *surely* punish them, and *severely*. It is grievous to observe, (but the daily public registers of the iniquity confirm the shameful charge) that *the land is full of adultery*. Scarce a paper can we look into, but some infamous relation of this crime, representing the guilt of *both sexes* equally; presents itself to our eye. What appears *common* through these discoveries, gives too great reason to suppose, may be still *more general*, as to *secret* practice. Nay, to the utter disgrace of human nature, and woefully portentous of the impending scourge of God's displeasure, even instances of *clerical* trespass this way, too frequently shock our courts of Justice. Some impious servants of the altar, still dare to tread in the impure steps of Eli's dissolute sons; and are yet suffered to abide in the holy office they have dishonoured, with no other stigma than the penalty of the *common laws*, which is no more equivalent to such foul offence, than was the *slender rebuke* of the lukewarm Eli: *Nay my sons, for it is no good report I hear, ye make the Lord's people to transgress*. It is to be feared, I say, such unholy, ill-judged favour, may finally bring a curse upon the sacred order, and that in the completion of
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*desolation, many may crouch for a piece of silver, and sue for a morsel of bread, not in the office of priest, but (as we have the daily example before our eyes, in the case of an out-cast priesthood of another nation) as needy suitors for common charity. This is a vice which frequently attaches murder to its train of evil. The adulterer will hunt for the precious life (saith Solomon, Prov. xxvi.) We have a tremendous instance of it in the deplorable conduct of the offending David. It is generally at a period when plenty increaseth, and luxury abounds, that this crime becomes more prevalent, and always in proportion as the fear of God hath ceased to be predominant in the land: witness the fate of a neighbouring people, notoriously guilty of this breach of the Divine commandment, so as to look upon it as no disgrace, or inconvenience, but on the contrary, to indulge and license it, by universal habit. Thus God reproacheth these crimes in Jer. v. 7. *How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by those that are no gods; when I had fed them to the full (that is, brought them to the highest pitch of worldly prosperity) they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the barlots houses; they were as fed horses in the morning, every man neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as this?* And now attend to the final and dreaded sentence: *Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy, take away the battlements, for they are not the Lord's. In short, this is the most ungenerous, filthy, treacherous, cruel,**

and *ruinous* sin that man or woman can be guilty of, and as there is no necessity to dwell longer on its evil tendency, after what hath been advanced against it from the mouth of God Himself, I shall close this charge, with the Apostle's awful sentence, *That whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* And that all addicted to this abominable crime deceive themselves most woefully, for *neither fornicators nor adulterers shall ever inherit the kingdom of God.* This I mention as a terror to *private* offenders, who not only contribute by their iniquities to the *general* calamities of the nation, but will hereafter themselves receive the due reward of their impure, and graceless conduct, unless forsaken, and most heartily repented of.

From a *carnal*, (though most deadly) sin, I proceed to instance one, if possible, still fouler and more fatal, and that is *ingratitude*; the sin of fallen spirits; which in proportion as it discovers itself to have infected our nature, assimilates us to the fountain of all iniquity, the evil spirit himself. I shall not enlarge much upon this foul spot in our common nature; we all know, and feel, how black it is, by experiencing its effects from one another. But when it is considered as shewn to God, the *Author* of our very *existence*; the *Cause* of our *redemption*: our constant Friend, from the cradle to the grave, whose condescending love is boundless as *Himself*; the account is justly magnified against us, and we should hide our heads in sorrow, and contrition, for the very *best* are more or less contaminated by
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pride and self-conceit, and consequently disposed to lessen the glory that alone is due to God.

We are now assembled to make a public, positive, avowal of these several blemishes in our composition, and of our various trespasses against Heaven. We have this day acknowledged in our prayers, and with strict truth, “ * that we have
“ been signally blessed in the unmolested enjoyment
“ of true religion, and the possession of abundant
“ temporal prosperity, but that we have ungratefully
“ forsaken God, the source of all true happiness, and
“ sought for it in our vain and sinful imaginations.”

We have prayed for grace “ to put away all ungodli-
“ ness and sinful lusts; to be delivered from the
“ power and wicked counsels of our enemies.” We have *allowed* that “ without God’s aid, all our utmost
“ efforts will be in vain,” and have humbly and wisely submitted our “ counsels, hands, and hearts,
“ to his divine direction.” And we seal our sincerity by personal acts of self-denial, abstinence, and public humiliation. Now what is the *end* of all this? is it not to conciliate the favor of God to us? and to endeavor to prevail upon him to protect us from destruction? and to convince the unbelieving foes of our peace, that *God’s arm stretched out to save*, can defeat the most daring designs of human force or policy? Well, suppose the gracious Lord should be so merciful as to hear our very imperfect petitions at this time; to grant us victory, and to give us a farther day of trial. What! if we were to take no notice of such deliverance; to appoint

* Words of the Form of Prayer.

no general solemn thanks in *return* for such great and unmerited favor; or to testify the sense of our success no otherwise than by *riotous, sensual* mirth, by extravagant, and licentious rejoicings, and vain and mutual gratulation of our national wisdom and valour? Would *such* a mode of celebrating our deliverance be correspondent with the profession of this day's service? Should we not be justly censured, by any pious observer, as guilty of *extreme ingratitude*? Of the most foul neglect? nay, of base inconsideration, bordering upon insanity! I will again expose the gross unworthiness of such omission, by bringing it to the test, of what we owe, and usually pay our earthly benefactors. If a man was involved in debt, and ready to be dragged to prison, by merciless creditors, till he had paid the uttermost farthing; his property all seized, and his dearest kindred exposed to *want*, and *ruin*; how would it be expected he would treat that generous friend, who *freely* should interpose his *power*, procure his *liberty*, and afford the means of *reinstating* his affairs? Would it be by taking *no notice* of him, but by making *merry* with *dissolute* companions? Could any thing surpass ingratitude like this? Would it not deserve a future just desertion? and that every misfortune might speedily overtake the worthless object of *former* favor? I leave the application to yourselves; it is too obvious to be more explicit.

May God, in his mercy, grant our present petition! May we find grace to keep our holy resolutions! And should we prove so fortunate, as to
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experience a *reprieve*, may our return be shewn, becoming rescued sinners, and pious Christians.

Thus have I shewn you, in these two discourses, the real, and alarming causes, (so far as private trespasses and neglects contribute to make up the measure of public iniquity,) which are likely to bring down visitations from Heaven for our offences. No man surely can be so dull or obstinate, as not to know, and own, that in proportion to the length of time that we have experienced mercies without number, the more we have to answer for in having *abused* them. And consequently, the frequent calls and warnings, and favors we have received, do render us riper for correction: the measure of our iniquities being fuller than at the beginning. For as the Apostle speaks on another occasion (but very applicable to the present case) *It is now high time that we should wake out of sleep*, (that is, it is time to rouse from the death of sin) *since as our salvation is nearer than when we first believed, so is our destruction nearer than when we first offended.*

Nor let any man be so rash, on one hand, or so *weak* on the other, as because vengeance *against bad works is not speedily executed, therefore fully to set his heart in him to do evil*; or to conclude, because our enemies have been so long prevented from effecting our ruin, that therefore they will never be allowed to punish us. Only consult the History of the Bible, and you will there see abundant instances of God's deserting whole nations, larger and more powerful than our own, to quick and utter destruction, and wherein are specified the
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most terrible personal calamities, to men, women, and children, and even the cattle, and produce of the land, that can be described, or fancied; though in the infatuation and pride of *their hearts*, *they* also boasted, as many do in *these* days, *none of this evil shall come upon us, neither shall we see sword or feel famine*, Jer. v. 12. And if you further consult the histories of the world, you will have full conviction of still more and heavier judgments occasionally visited on the ungodly; and indeed we need no stronger warning to open our eyes to the probability of such events, than the speedy and weighty miseries that have deluged France with blood. People do not consider, that as it was in the days of Noah, so hath it ever been, and ever will be to those whom God hath devoted to destruction. *They eat, they drank, they married, and were giving in marriage, and knew not*, (that is, would not believe and see the danger), *till the flood came and took them all away*. And why was this? They were deluded through the deceitfulness of sin, and I repeat it, (for the common benefit of us all, and that *we* may never experience any of God's four sore judgments,) that our sins, continued in and unrepented of, will consign *us* to a *similar* fate. For thus saith the Lord in reproach of his back-sliding people: *Behold ye trust in lying words that cannot profit; will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and curse and stand before me in this house which is called by my name? Because of such profanation and hypocrisy, and because ye have done all these works* (saith the Lord), *and I spake unto you,*
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rising up early, and speedily, but ye heard not, and calling unto you but ye answered not, therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place that I gave unto you, and to your fathers, as I have done before to Shiloh. That is, I will deprive you of your religion, and the ark of my protection, and reject you from being any longer my servants, and I will cast you out of my sight as I have cast out others of your brethren. And to increase the horror of the threatening, He adds, therefore pray not thou for this people, neither cast up cry or prayer for them; neither make intercession to me, for I will not bear thee, Jer. vii. 8, 9, 10, &c. Sad, hopeless, dreadful state! Far, far be such displeasure from us! or rather, never may we provoke it.

But if men are yet so confident as to build upon the arm of our own strength; the skill and valour of our forces, the power of our naval armaments, and the happy situation of our island; then let them remember what they have confessed this day,—that all these are vain without that *succour of Omnipotence*. And should any ignorantly conclude, that because our foes have not been suffered to invade us in *our* memory, therefore that event is *never* likely to take place; they must be told that in former days, when our soldiery were no less renowned for courage, and the mass of the community *far less* corrupted by effeminate manners, and the poison of luxury, this our island hath been often reduced by foreign plunderers. Let them recollect, that at no period of time before, were our inveterate enemies so strong by
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sea or land; never before had they conquered a whole maritime power whose country commands our coasts; never before had they so large a navy of their own, and the addition of another to it, the navy of a people, who were always our rivals in commerce, and from treacherous allies, have now declared themselves our common, and determined foe. These circumstances wear a serious aspect, and should make us think in time for what sad end they *may*, in the order of Providence, have been permitted to take place.

But there is another error which many indulge upon this subject. How, say they, can there be any thing to fear, from such a *wicked* people?—such an *unbelieving, sacrilegious, vicious* race! surely such miscreants must not always expect success! They quite mistake the case. God certainly doth not approve the impious conduct of any people, nor doth He protect their cause through *favor* to them. He employs them only as proper tools to punish *others*, whose ungrateful trespasses have provoked his vengeance, and in due time he will as surely visit and condemn these proud blasphemers and contemners of Christ's religion, as *by* them He punishes the polluted and false professors of it. To suppose that Heaven licences such power further than as it is instrumental to the wise and just designs of Providence, would be as faulty, and absurd, as to conceive that an earthly Judge admires the character of a *hangman*, because the law consigns the criminal to the business of his shocking office.

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To conclude, though a small portion, we yet form a part of the body of the nation, and may contribute by our conduct either way, to induce, or avert the impending visitation. It behoves us therefore, to be most exemplary in this important article of christian circumspection, and speedy, and earnest, in correcting every error, that flows from its neglect. Under the sufficient commission of my own serious office, I have judged this present opportunity seasonable, of delivering my free opinion upon a few particular points, which more immediately concerns *ourselves*, which duty has been discharged in the purest love to those committed to my care, and in strict, and indispensable obedience to our Lord's command. That as the Apostle teaches in our public duties, *all things should be done decently and in order*, and as to our *private* conduct, *we should be careful to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God, and towards men*. For suppose the worst should happen, that we should live to see the measure of the nation's sins filled up, and that judgment was even at the door, *still*, the service of this day, and the purposes it is calculated to produce, are highly necessary for the very *best* to cultivate, since if we are permitted to fall with the most guilty, (like the Galileans of old that were promiscuously sacrificed by a barbarous decree), it is surely the highest wisdom to *prepare* for our reception in the Blessed Kingdom provided for those that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity: for those who charitably correct the sins of their neighbours: that daily pray for the reformation

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tion of the land, and that the *hearts of the disobedient should be effectually turned to the wisdom of the just*. To dismiss you then in the words of the DIVINE PERSON, whose serious cautions, to the people at large demands continual and devout regard, and to remind you that even *good* men may be appointed to share in temporal sufferings: Remember, He tells us, that the victims that were devoted to Pilate's cruel slaughter, were not more sinful than *other* Galileans; but that what concerns each individual to lay to heart, is *this, that unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish*.

God grant this precious gift to every one here present,—to every sinner in the nation. *A repentance unto life not to be repented of*, and that to the glory of God the Father for the sake and merits of Jesus Christ, and through the powerful working of the Spirit of Love upon our souls; to whom Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God in mystic Trinity united, be ascribed all power and praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

AN

ACT OF PRAISE TO ALMIGHTY GOD:

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH

OF

HINXWORTH,

ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF DOING DUTY,

AFTER THE REPAIR OF THE CHURCH.

SERMON XXIV.

FOR THE MORNING.

PSALM CXV. 1.

*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name
give the praise.*

SAINTE PAUL in writing to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. x. 31.) concerning that principle which is absolutely necessary to qualify every action of the christian's life, in the sight of Heaven; most particularly, and earnestly exhorts them, to let their whole conduct be directed by *religious duty*. *Whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, or whatsoever ye do,* says he, *do all to the glory of God.*

As this is the first time of our assembling in the house of the Lord, since the public worship has been necessarily omitted, it may be naturally expected, that I should say something applicable to the opening of our church again. Although we have been for some time deprived of the regular, and eligible mode of performing our united service to our heavenly Father, yet as far as our bounden exertions have been employed in *outward* modes of zeal for the honor of his most holy name, we may

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humbly hope, even *that* instance of respect, will meet divine favor, if we ascribe the glory, where alone it is due; and in *this*, as every other pious action, confess the *needful* part which his permission and providence claim, in all our best endeavours.

In discoursing to you at present, my brethren, I shall not confine myself to that very connected, and argumentative form which I usually adopt for your instruction from this place, but request your attention to some *general* subjects, which demand our most grateful praise,—to some earnest exhortations, to fit yourselves for God's favor; and to some plain thoughts, on various points of religious concern, which I hope will be found suitable to this occasion, and which have occurred to me, in consequence of the improvements we have been making in this holy House. These, being actuated by the genuine spirit of the text, I humbly trust, through God's compassion to the infirmities of our very best designs, will be accepted by him, as a just tribute for the manifold blessings bestowed upon us, and be sanctified to the conviction, and comfort, of all who hear them.

First then, my brethren, we cannot be too careful against taking to ourselves any degree of *merit* in the performance of this public work, or indeed in any *other* which we expect God to prosper; for in fact, in whatever proportion, either our respective *intentions*, or the powers of *acting*, are concerned, it behoves us equally to give *all the praise and glory to God*. Every humble, and considerate christian,

christian, must readily acknowledge, that the more we strictly search our hearts, and trace the leading principles of our general plans, the more we shall be obliged to own this truth, that *unto us*, no portion of perfection, no original commendation can be due.

As to our *intentions*, who will dare to say, that any anxious desire, or any sterling purpose that is truly favorable to the reverence of God's name, and acceptable in his sight, could either rise, or continue in our mind, without a share of the spirit of his grace? That an *outward* work of *seeming* honor might be suggested, and promoted on *other* principles, is undeniable, but then it is equally certain, that *such* an undertaking could never reasonably expect the approbation of its pretended object; to whom every offering must be made in purity, and singleness of heart, not mixed with any vain, or worldly views, or sullied by selfish, or ostentatious gratifications. As far, then, as real regard to God's honor and service, has influenced our duty in this particular, to HIM we must attribute every good motion of the heart, on *this*, and every occasion, in which his glory is concerned.

Let us now consider the *means* of *executing* our commendable designs. Surely we should be most presuming hypocrites, were we to deny, that to *Him* likewise in *this* respect, the praise is *wholly* due, and we should have been as blameable in not employing the means to his honor, who provided them for that *very purpose**, as we should be false to

* Alluding to the lands bequeathed for the repairs of the Church.

arrogate the least degree of merit to *ourselves*, for acting the part of faithful stewards in supplying the instrumental succours committed to our custody for the work. This second particular suggests some general remarks, which I beg leave to submit to your consideration, on this part of my subject.

I apprehend none who have ever weighed the too prevailing dispositions, and pursuits of people in general, will venture to oppose the truth of this assertion, that we can neither boast of extraordinary inclinations, or active zeal in private, or public contributions for works of the kind before us. On the contrary, it is a grievous, but indisputable fact (which many places prove) that if it depended wholly on the immediate will, and supply of the inhabitants to build up, or decently repair, their respective churches (even where the ability cannot be doubted) we should see many more sacred ruins than happily is the case at present. Nay, it must be granted, that with all the provision that public benefactions, and wholesome laws, have furnished, to *prevent* the consequences of private selfishness, and indifference in these concerns, yet a becoming readiness for preserving the decent appearance of our churches (some instances excepted) is far from *general* in country places. In many parts of the kingdom, immense subscriptions have been quickly raised for building public chapels, while the parish churches are disgracefully suffered to want a needful, and moderate repair. It is immediately connected with the subject of this discourse, to afford you a short reason, for this *preference*, on one side, and

and *neglect* on the other. *Novelty*, and *gain*, are jointly concerned in it; especially in great cities: to which a plausible plea may sometimes be added; which is the *comfort* of the congregation, where population has so increased, as to render it expedient to increase the *number* of places for the public worship. But it generally happens, that, through the schemes of *adventurers*, and the force of the above raging principle together, our ancient parish churches are too often deserted, while these newly-designed, and elegant buildings, are crowded to the very entrance. From this occasional observation, we are directed to give due praise to God, that the pleas of a ruinous, inconvenient, or uncomfortable edifice, are guarded against in our case, and that of many other parishes. *It is not unto us*, however, but *unto God's Name*, that *the glory should be given*, for having put it into the hearts of our pious ancestors, to *provide* against such evils, as their wisdom saw would ensue with *time*. And though they lived at a darker period of Gospel purity, than is happily *our* lot, yet they greatly exceeded us in the generous contributions and free-will offerings of their worldly substance, to the honor of HIM, who supplied the power, and for the benefit of *us*, their less considerate posterity.

Every serious and steady friend of the established church, can never be too thankful to God, for having made this provision for the celebrating his holy name, from past, to future ages; whereby a much heavier burden is saved the people at large, than otherwise must have been imposed, had no such

provident resource existed; and in which case, the unavoidable decrease of public solemn worship, would have gradually taken place. And this further preference must be given to these substantial *venerable* buildings over the light and whimsical appearance of *modern* structures, that they are neither exposed to the speedy decay, and frequent alterations of the *latter*, but transmit to us a lasting mark of the pious munificence of former times, which was exhibited in a solemn and uniform style and taste of sacred architecture. Before I conclude this head, it will be proper to take notice, that the difficulty, which may occur to some, as to the justest method of levying supplies to defray occasional charges of this nature, is easily resolved in every case, where *land* has been appropriated for the purpose; because, however in a long course of time, the property originally bequeathed, may, from various causes, have changed its *mode* of being *occupied*, yet as the *soil exists*, whatever persons are proved to *profit* most by the *produce* of that land, it must always be determined on any equitable judgment, in every place so circumstanced, that those persons will be liable to their *proportionable burthen*: for common sense informs us, that when estates are left by will, to any particular purpose, the persons chiefly benefited by these estates, whether rich or poor, must be always subject to the *tax*, or *debt*, the legacy or property was designed to *raise*. This I think it my duty to hint to you on this occasion, because the lands immediately subjected to defray the present parochial burden,

burden, being originally appointed for that *sacred purpose*, it cannot be improper to remind you of the *nature* of the business from this holy place; even from the very *spot* the property was intended to support. You must all be sensible, that it was not left to any *particular* families for their *exclusive private* use, but on condition, that whenever called upon, they should supply their proportionate share towards the necessary charges of the *church repairs*, and for which reason it would be strictly right, and provident, to raise an *annual* tax on the persons *mostly* benefited by the same, and then a *fund* would always be at hand, without incurring *difficulty*, or *complaint*, to raise the money *.

Having shewn you how much we are indebted to God's goodness for these outward means of promoting his glory, I will proceed now, to consider some further articles of praise, for which we are all indebted to his forbearing mercy, and which will naturally introduce such proper exhortations, as may help to warn us of the danger of disobedience; and to correct our numerous failings and transgressions. When we reflect, my brethren, upon the prosperous and happy state of *our* nation, as contrasted with the disordered and calamitous situation

* As the lands in question, are now chiefly rented by the Farmers, at a very low rate; the Labourers, to whose tenements they are allotted, not being able from the high price of every article of life, to *stock* them as *formerly*: it seems but reasonable, that the tax should be levied in proportion, on those who reap most advantage by them.

of a neighbouring kingdom; surely we must allow it impossible to be too diligent in every exercise of Christian duty, in order to conciliate the divine protection; or too grateful for the distinguished favors we have received, and still possess. HERE, in this, as yet happy land, every man may sit in pleasant peace under his own *vine, and fig-tree*, and enjoy the returning fruits of his industry, or inheritance. Whereas under the commotions of powerful, jealous, and contending parties, no property is *safe*; no comfort *lasting*, but violence, and discord are spreading daily devastation, and life itself, with every thing most valuable, as *fortune, parents, friends, and children*, are hourly exposed to the ravages of a discontented, and unfeeling mob.

It may be profitable for us to advert in this place, to the probable *cause* of these heavy visitations; for doubtless they are under the direction of unerring wisdom, to correct, to punish, refine, and awaken a rebellious portion of God's creatures. We may conclude, without presumption, that the wilful, and reigning errors of a superstitious, and ignorant worship on *one* hand, and the general character of daring infidelity, and licentiousness, on the *other*, have drawn down this judgment on the people at large; and that by rendering them blind to their real interests, and rash in pursuit of fancied happiness, the Almighty vengeance, like a refiner's fire, is separating the dross of such jarring and debasing properties, as are wholly inconsistent with truth, and Christian virtue, and must be purified or totally
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extirpated, before the mass can settle in beautiful form, and useful order.

Let us beware, lest equal, if not more terrible judgments overtake us; for in proportion as we have neglected *greater blessings*, we may expect *severer punishments*. *We* have suffered no absolute, tyrannical dominion; no miseries of unjudged confinement; no Bastille; no oppressive laws, or cruel masters. *We* have not been blinded in our religious notions by the delusive dreams of Popish infallibility, or superstitious charms; but for several ages, have been blessed with the most unrivalled freedom, with the purest light of the Gospel, breaking forth daily into still brighter discoveries of the truth; *We* have neither had our civil, or religious liberties cramped or threatened: but all sects and parties are permitted to think, and worship together, as their *education* and *opinions* lead them to judge right. The only restraint required, is for the positive benefit of ALL; that each should be contented with such valuable privileges as the constitution of the kingdom warrants, and not encroach, or violently resist established order, and that persuasion which marks the general sentiments of the nation; and to which, the wise appointment of the legislature (under the ruling Providence of Almighty God) has fixed such sanctions, as supply a preservative against confusion, and the ruinous effects of factious liberty. Let us beware, I say, (my brethren) lest we abuse such *precious blessings*, for as sure as we do, we shall in time experience the merited scourge of such foul ingratitude, and mad misconduct. It is impossible
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to deny, but that the universal disregard of all religious concerns, seems justly to *threaten* some future vengeance, unless a speedy reformation in all ranks, takes place, and though the Lord is *long-suffering, and of great goodness, and slow to anger*, and therefore many of us may happily never live to see the consequence of his final displeasure against this land; yet it no less behoves us, my brethren, for our *own* sakes, to attend to our *private* provocations of his wrath, and to take heed to our ways. Such a conduct as it becomes us to pursue, doth naturally suggest the following earnest exhortations, which I shall adapt to the general welfare of society, no less than to the happiness of individuals.

First, then, my friends, let me *intreat* you to pay the *most conscientious regard* to the interest of those *most dear* to you, I mean your own offspring. *Children*, (saith the Psalmist) *are a gift, and inheritance, that cometh of the Lord*. Consider them *as such*, and trifle not with that *authority* committed to you by God, and nature over them. They are certainly either the greatest curse, or blessing we can *here* experience: but if through your neglect, they fail of endless happiness; oh! think in time, that you may prevent the misery of their proving a still *more heavy* curse *hereafter*; and that, instead of such a weight of woe, as no words can paint, or fancy reach, they may on the contrary, *add* to your supreme delight, in the realms of everlasting bliss, and make good the cheering promise to the wise, and faithful parent, that happy is the man, who hath them on his side, when the deadly foe assaults him

him, and that they shall help him to enjoy his victory in the gate that leads to endless glory. Fear not, then, my friends, to *chasten* them when they act amiss, and be grateful towards all who are willing to *help* you in this essential duty. In riper years, they will respect and love you more, for such discrete attention. Whereas partial fondness, and ruinous indulgence, will endanger the peace of both soul, and body, may cause them to rise up against you in the judgment, and curse to all eternity, the hour of their *birth*, and their unkind, unhappy connections.

The judicious care of children, is a duty we owe not only to *them*, and to *ourselves*, but to our *country* also. If we would have them prosper, we must strive to remove whatever will naturally *bind* their success. If we are truly sensible of the comforts they are capable of affording, we must attend *most diligently*; to every thing that concerns them in their *early years*; and as they are the stock which help to form the rising generation, if we wish the *future* welfare of the nation, we must be circumspect in our different stations, to breed up such characters, as may contribute to bring a blessing, and not a judgment on the land. In the state of infancy, we are all alike: high and low, rich and poor, all partake of original depravity, with allowance for various *tempers*, and *degrees* of constitutional vices. Education, and parental care; or ignorance and wilful neglect, are the efficient causes which make the *material difference* in their *future conduct*. The good or evil influence of these several
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natural causes, by no means excludes the *necessary* and *assisting* grace of God, to qualify the utmost care on *one* hand, or to repair any consequent mischief on the *other*; but on the contrary, proves its *power*, or its *absence*, in proportion as we employ those various *means*, which Providence has directed, to prepare the mind for the habitation of his good spirit; or that we resist the dictates of conscience, which point out the danger of being without it; for in fact, the benefit of a truly valuable education, proceeds from a happy share of divine grace, directing the judgment to the wisest conduct, in this important article. So that no parent can plead excuse for inattention to their children's *morals*, since they have scripture precepts to enforce their vigilance. Few, if any, are so ignorant, as not to know the value of *good example*; if you have grace *yourselves*, you will never spare them in any failings which lead to wickedness; you will encourage them when dutiful, and punish them when they rebel. Ingratitude, falsehood, cruelty, and injustice, should *never* escape chastisement. The greatest crimes proceed from small beginnings. If you would destroy the growing weeds, you must effectually wound the supplying *roots*, and to sum up all the advice so short an opportunity will admit on this important subject; above all things, keep them from the society of ill-educated, and unprincipled companions. *Evil communications corrupt good manners*, and with all your admonition, and occasional correction, if you do not completely guard against this *one* fatal evil, the rest will prove in vain. As far

as you gain ground by the judicious exercise of private discipline, it will all be lost through the pernicious influence of vicious company.

Ten years close, and I may safely say almost *hourly* observation of what concerns this very arduous task, intitles me (my brethren) to speak most confidently of my experience in it. *Few*, I believe, had ever much less reason to be severe; and few were ever *more* so, where *necessity* rendered it *expedient*; and I am so thoroughly convinced of the indispensable duty of every parent to act the earliest, and most watchful part in this respect, that I scruple not, to declare to you, (from the purest goodwill to the best interests of yourselves and families) that whenever I turn a thought to the valuable blessings that are withdrawn from me, I feel the greatest consolation in this reflexion, that I did all in *my* poor power to prevent an ETERNAL separation; that I most fearfully watched every *inclination* to transgress, and as constantly punished every *actual commission* of it. That in every appearance of natural degeneracy, I not only exposed the future consequence of it, but strove to check the progress by *present* reprehension; and this is what you *'all* must do, my friends, if you desire to have *real* pleasure in your children *now*, or ever expect to see them rise, and bless you in the world to come. And that you may not fail to train them up *in the way that they should go*, be particularly cautious, my brethren, in watching over your *own ways*. We are all on trial for a better state than this: for an existence that is to last *for ever*. If you in earnest wish to obtain a place in
heaven,

heaven, you must not only avoid those grosser crimes that will inevitably shut you out of it, but you must cultivate those *tempers*, that are absolutely necessary, to fit you for the *enjoyment* of so pure a habitation. There are many who may flatter themselves that they have obtained a good report, comparatively with the more *notorious sinner*, who still, if they are alive to the distinguishing character of a *Christian*, must own they have much to *learn*, as well as UNLEARN, before they will feel *that peace which passeth all understanding*. What I shall observe in this respect, is not intended as *particularly* levelled at the place we live in, but it is the too general character of *all* places, more or less, though I am sorry to say, that in proportion to comparative numbers, and the *means* of knowing better, I fear we have no great cause to boast of our excelling *other* places in true religious, or moral conduct. I will briefly mention some of the most prevailing evil habits, which usually beset the lower orders of mankind, and most earnestly exhort you to strive against *their* power, no less than the commission of the most dissolute actions.

To begin with *insolence to superiors*. This is a very common failing in those whose lot is cast in the lower sphere of life; it proceeds from pride, conceit, and folly, and discovers that levelling principle, which characters of this description are ready to entertain, when any thing thwarts their private wishes, or opinion. In proportion as it becomes general, it has ever been instrumental to every factious innovation in the world; and always
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meets its ruin when carried to the highest pitch. It may truly be termed the spirit of *Antichrist*, for it is the spirit of *Satan* himself, rebelling against *order* and *pre-eminence*; doubting the authority of that Supreme Power who rules on earth, as well as in Heaven, and hath placed all things here in useful *subordination*, in imitation of his more perfect government *above*, who hath appointed different ranks, and offices, in unerring wisdom. As some are raised to *rule*, so others are born to *obey*; and unless we learn humility, submission, and contentment now, to which end Providence hath assigned the several stations he knows to be *fittest* for us, we shall certainly be *unprepared* for relishing that obedience, which constitutes the happiness of *Angels*. For the person who hath not learnt to do his duty, and be contented in the station allotted him *here*, is in no good way of being qualified for the particular situation that might, otherwise, have been appointed him in a *happy eternity*. The *Christian*, then, will respect superior orders of men, for *conscience-sake*; and so conduct himself in the post he fills at present, that by regular trial, and wisely using the trust he now possesses, he may finally have the *true riches committed to him*, when he will be more capable of discerning, and admiring, the value of such different conditions, and their attendant discipline.

ENVY is a no less fatal passion than *discontent*; they generally accompany each other, and rule most violently, in our imperfect nature; a grudging, greedy, selfish temper, does in a manner *steal* the soul from God. Although it robs not *openly*, it may
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be considered as continually *pilfering* in its disposition. *Envy* cannot bear to see the least prosperity in others, or any favor pass *itself*. This too is wholly the effect of *pride*; it is hard to say, in which description of men, this temper is most hateful; in the rich, or in the poor? The former, one might suppose had *many reasons* to be satisfied, (yet we often see them coveting still more,) and the occasional wants of the *latter*; seem naturally to induce a *fellow-feeling*. *The poor man that oppresses the poor*, (says Solomon) *is like a sweeping rain that leaves no food.* And he who envieth him a mite of favor, is *little better*, since they want the *power* only, to devour the comfort that goes besides themselves. As a remedy against this very cruel disposition, we should reflect, that though we have not *all we wish*, there are many who *suffer* more *essential wants*; and that unless we cast away this *evil eye*, we shall be found far short, of that benevolence and universal love, which the Gospel requires of all Christ's true disciples; and without which, we never can be qualified to receive his heavenly welcome, or to enter into the joy of our Lord.

FALSEHOOD, and INJUSTICE, are the next foul blots, which disgrace the characters of men; and can never dwell in any soul desirous of Christian purity. The first likens men to the very author of all iniquity, who is the *father of lies*. It renders them contemptible to each other, and most hateful in the sight of God, who cannot possibly delight in any thing *that maketh a lie*. It destroys all mutual confidence, and justly deprives the person of every benefit

benefit from society. Liars are the most dangerous of all bad characters, for they deal forth wounds which may be *never healed*. They make havoc with the *reputation*, the dearest property we possess; and so heavy, and unpardonable is the *crime*; that God declares expressly, *that all liars shall have their part in the lake, that burns with fire and brimstone*. Let all speedily and earnestly repent, and forsake this deadly sin, that have been guilty of it, that they may escape this dreadful sentence, and by *speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ*.

Deceit, and *wrong* of every kind, are no less inconsistent with any pretensions to religious advancement; a tendency to these transgressions in the characters of lower life, is what supplies one subject of Agur's prayer, under the dreaded temptation of such a state. *Give me not poverty, lest being poor I steal*. So often as we hear the eighth commandment, and so sensible, as the most ignorant are of their strict title to their *own* effects, it is almost incredible, how often they mistake the bounds of justice, when encroaching upon their *neighbor's* property. The tenth commandment most plainly declares, how guilty we may be in this respect, without the *actual* depriving others of their goods. *Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbor's*, most completely forbids the very *DESIRE* of what does not belong to us. Every covetous, or unjust *desire*, is as positive a breach of the spirit of the commandment, and it is by not attending to the precept, *Thou shalt not covet*, but pursuing the

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evil disposition of the *heart*, that men proceed at last, to *actual* and serious fraud. Honesty in the poor, then, is an especial virtue; it raises them *friends*, and renders them dear to God, and man. It makes their earnings sweet; their rest secure; and frees them from the dishonor of suspicion. If, when *necessity*, and the busy *tempter* join to lessen the sinfulness of such transgressions, people would stop, and weigh the *nature* of the action, this just reflexion might help to prevent their being guilty of an error, that leads directly to the commission of a fraud; as for example, let all that are thus tempted, immediately apply the following question, ‘Is this thing *mine*, because I *want*, or *wish* to have it? or even because it never may be *missed*, or *used* by its proprietor? Again, as that which I do not *give*, can never rightfully belong to *others*, so that which is not *given me*, can never of right be mine.’ In short, if people could be brought to follow the golden rule, of doing as they would be done by, this *single maxim* would wonderfully repair the want of early education, and every neglect that leads to habits of pilfering, and plundering one another. The poor would be satisfied with what they could honestly gain, and God would never fail to raise them help in any great distress, if they were but strict in keeping *this*, and all his other commandments.

Having now afforded you some general hints upon the principal branches of your moral conduct, and which are positively necessary for you to possess, and cultivate, in order to assure yourselves,

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that

that the spirit of grace hath made any *real impression* on your *hearts*, I should now proceed to communicate to you some further occasional thoughts, more closely suited to the immediate object of this discourse, and which have occurred to me in consequence of our late improvements in this sacred fabric, in which we are now assembled; but time requires that I should defer them, and as they will furnish sufficient matter for your consideration in the afternoon, I shall now conclude with the words of the last verse of the Psalm from which my text is taken:—and as I devoutly hope, we are duly sensible of God's great goodness, in enabling us to meet again so comfortably, in this our own place of public worship, and to unite in prayer, and supplications for ourselves and *each other*; let us *implore him to be mindful of us, and to bless us in all our words and works. Let us join with heart and voice to bless the Lord from this time forth for evermore; and praise his Holy Name for all the benefits bestowed upon us.* Thus let us humbly and devoutly close our present bounden service, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom, one only powerful, and Eternal God, be Glory and Dominion, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXV.

FOR THE EVENING. ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

PSALM CXV. 1.

*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name
give the praise.*

IN my former discourse to you upon these words, I set before you the incumbent duty of thanksgiving to Almighty God, for every good intention of our heart, no less than for the happy means afforded us of contributing to these *outward* marks of religious veneration to the holy House where God hath chosen *to place his name* amongst us. I exhorted you, likewise, to pay that becoming attention to every moral precept of the Divine law, the exercise of which, is positively necessary to prepare you for a more perfect discharge of duty in an *unpolluted state of being*, and by which we testify that our daily tribute of public worship, is not a merely *formal act*, but a *sacrifice of the heart*, no less than of the lips or tongue; that our prayers have not been made to consecrated walls alone, but have ascended up on high, and obtained *grace for us to work out our salvation*, according to the purifying

fyng spirit of the gospel: that they have reached the throne of the Mediator, who hath vouchsafed such a portion of the gifts he hath procured for man, as prove that we belong to him, and have an interest in his favour.

I am come now, in the second place, to submit to your farther consideration, a few plain remarks, which our late unavoidable omission of divine service, in this place, hath occasionally presented to my mind. By a serious application of them to our own particular conduct, I trust we shall in future show redoubled diligence to benefit by that orderly provision we enjoy, and the comfortable means of adoring our Maker, and enriching our minds with all-saving wisdom.

If we are truly sensible how much we owe to God's unmerited indulgence, for the ability of celebrating his glory in this particular instance of parochial duty, it surely behoves us to attend most gratefully, to the abundant causes of praise, for which, both as a people, and in our respective stations, we are all so deeply indebted to the riches of his mercy. Some of these innumerable blessings (of a public nature) I mentioned to you in the morning. Let me intreat you, my brethren, not to be content with barely *listening* to an earnest exhortation on this subject; which sounds upon the *ear*, and makes no *further impression*; but strive to experience the *inward* principle. Examine yourselves strictly, how far pious gratitude to the author of every good gift, hath influenced your feelings for these, and every other comfort you enjoy; and whether

whether on the contrary, some are not indifferent, if not wholly *dead*, to any sense of the *propriety*, or *expediency* of the work in which we have been engaged. If the part we have taken in this sacrifice of praise is *pure*, we cannot too highly magnify our Creator's Name, for thus disposing us to seek his honour. If we feel wanting in this essential motive to qualify our exertions, we cannot too *speedily*, or *earnestly* implore Him to soften the grievous hardness of our nature, and to incline us to think more worthily of the duty we continually owe him.

Having *completed* this humble labour of religious respect, let us above all things take heed to the main *end* of it, let us consider it, as an incentive or memorial to worship God in the *beauty of holiness*. Our Blessed Lord compares the conduct of the ostentatious, and specious hypocrites among the Pharisees, *to whited, or well-ornamented sepulchres*, which speak a beautiful appearance, *outwardly*, though within they are filled with all *impurity*, and *dead men's bones*. We may aptly borrow the same allusion as a seasonable instruction in the *present case*. Let us endeavour to purify our inward thoughts, and the ruling principle of our hearts, that they may resemble the cleanness of these outward walls of the sanctuary; and let us not be satisfied with approaching God in our *best apparel*; or in elegant *buildings*, while the temple of our *heart* continues still *ungarnished*, and *unswept*. And while it is both decent, and becoming in us, to dedicate the very best of the good things we

receive at the hands of our heavenly Father, to his immediate honor; let us beware, lest our affections and desires are clothed (as it were) in *filthy rags*, and as unfit for an accepted service, as a *dirty person*, and a *ruinous church*, when in our power to prepare them better for the divine presence.

As every occurrence in life is under the guidance of Providence, there can be no event, whether public, or private, but what will furnish ample subject for religious meditation, and spiritual improvement. It is a profitable method for Christians to pursue, to consider even the most accidental circumstances of life in this point of view. By exercising the mind to this kind of judgment, we shall gradually accustom ourselves to such a serious consideration of all temporal things, as will wonderfully assist the practice of having *our conversation in Heaven*, while here on earth. When we can bring ourselves to discern the hand of God in every particular that befalls us, we may then be truly said, to live like them, who *have God in the world*. Articles we were accustomed to view as indifferent, or unfortunate in *themselves*, will then present a valuable consequence, and a favourable side, as under the management of the *Supreme Director*. And by having our eyes open to discover the *propriety*, and advantage of certain positive duties, and appointments, we shall be guarded against the fatal effects of prejudiced opinions, and prevented from attributing more to *partial* methods
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of devotion (or *favourite teachers*) than in *themselves*, they are either calculated, or designed to yield.

I would now more particularly submit, how far the following observations agree with the above acknowledged truths, and with the sentiments of the congregation. For my *own* part, I am inclined to think, that during the few Sundays we have been unavoidably prevented from paying our usual homage to Almighty God in our *own parish*, many serious and steady minded persons cannot but have been rendered *more* sensible of the vast *privilege, blessing, and comfort*, of a stated *parochial service*, than probably ever occurred to them *before*, in the like degree, in the course of their lives. The more I weigh the intended benefit in itself, the further I am persuaded that the goodness of God was never more conspicuously displayed, in assisting the wants of man, than by directing them to the division of the country into separate parishes, and in endowing them with their respective churches, and an established ministry.

Being desirous of setting every proper example on the Sabbath day, to those under my care, I have attended occasionally at the neighbouring churches; I have heard some truly evangelical discourses; and what is more, I trust they proceeded from the *heart* of the preacher. The pure spirit of the gospel, declared a *faithfulness* to the important cause in which we are engaged. My joint prayers were offered, that the word delivered, might take deep root in the mind of the *unconverted*, and strengthen them who are in the way of salva-

salvation. But still, from the concourse of people that attended out of *different* places, and who certainly were under no *particular necessity*, like *ourselves*, of leaving their *own* churches, I am more convinced than ever, of the error of wandering abroad for instruction on the Lord's day; of the great expediency and blessing of a *regular ministry*; and *stated times* and *places* of worship; and of the probable danger of yielding to a spirit of *novelty*, even in religious matters, for which no reasonable excuse, in *general*, can be advanced, while God continues to us the blessing of *order*, and an apostolical form of worship. To see people pouring in from all parts, like *sheep that had no shepherd*, I confess, to *me*, was a sight rather *melancholy*, than *pleasing*. I could not dispossess my mind of the principles that I was certain, actuated the larger portion of the congregation, and of the consequent, and hurtful influence to the rest of the community. I say *melancholy*, my brethren, for view it in which light you will, it must be truly so, to every judicious observer. If *variety*, or *curiosity*, contribute principally to fill a church, where is the *sincerity of the service*? and there is surely little probable hope of general benefit to persons thus disposed. And could it be proved true (which God forbid) that positive *necessity* inclined promiscuous multitudes to follow any one particular person, in preference to their *stated pastor*, or from *lack of means* to serve their God in spirit and truth, at their *own place*, most lamentably dreadful is the prospect. But lest I may be thought to
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judge too rashly, permit me to dwell a little longer on each of these particulars. Only, my brethren, indulge your own observations, and examine your *own* hearts. In the first instance, how can we judge more fairly of any case than by *effects*? Of the numbers then, that ever were, and ever will, be ready to follow what is called a FINE MAN, in *the pulpit*, have we experienced that the *generality* are either *suddenly*, or *gradually* converted to a better course of life, than those who are humbly willing to serve God in the quiet way appointed in their *own place*? Are they uniformly *more* christian and *more* moral in consequence of this, than other Christian and moral people who differ from them in this unsettled practice? You will say, perhaps, if *all* are not, *some* are. If this is granted, it follows, that it must be either owing to the power of the *Preacher*, or that it is NOT: If it is, as all have not an equal right to be called *fine men*, that is, as all have not the *same gifts*, what is to become of the abundant pastors and congregations who never possessed such talents as can attract the curious from their proper churches? If you say (as is really the truth) it is *not* the *preacher*, but the *power of God*, that works the change, then I reply, the influence of divine grace can operate equally by *one* instrument as by *another*, for it is an absurdity, bordering on positive *unbelief*, and arraigning the wisdom, and goodness of God at the same time, to suppose, that an *bumble Christian* heart, under the very *humblest minister* in point of *talents*, if it applies with earnest zeal to *know* God's will, and pure sincerity to

to *do* it, shall not be *blessed in its work*, and as surely receive the needful aid of both *preventing* and *assisting* grace, under the regular means that Providence has appointed for its improvement, as though it wearied itself the whole week through, in hunting after the most brilliant speakers, and powerful teachers. Now if this was not the truth, it would necessarily follow, that every place should *equally* be provided with a minister of *singular abilities*; with both constitutional power of *voice*, and intellectual power of *words*, to keep his congregation from wandering *to other places*. But the inexpediency of this, is obvious, by God's having ordered it *differently*: and even were it possible, or proper, that it should be otherwise, while such a passion as the *love of novelty*, remained in human nature; and as all men could not be in every point the *same*, though they were more generally accomplished than they are, this very same principle would still operate on many, to render them dissatisfied with the ordinary means provided for their parochial instruction where they lived.

But as another proof, that no extraordinary good effect can be generally expected from the mere difference of men's abilities, of any kind, and that such conversions are neither generally *sudden*, or the impressions *lasting*: only be honest enough, my brethren, to apply to your *own experience*, and examine your own *conduct*. Have not many of you, in your lives, attended diligently to the most awful lectures from the pulpit, delivered by the most *pious*, as well as *famous* men, and though for the
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time *present*, you have shuddered to the very quick, at the denunciations of Almighty vengeance; though you have burnt with hatred against your soul ingratitude towards a long-suffering God; though you mourned in bitterness of spirit, the weakness and depravity of your nature, and for the moment, have felt conviction, that there could be no hope for sinners, but in the ransom made by the precious blood of Christ; in the powerful satisfaction of *his* atonement: that you had no hope of help but through the necessary assistance of his grace: that all your very best works, were sullied by the *selfish principle*, and truly worthless in the sight of God, on *that* account. In short, have you not most fully joined with the preacher's earnest assurance, *that from head to foot you were all corrupt, and full of putrifying sores?* that there was no whole part but what needed the healing hand of Christ, to render it possible you could be cleansed, or even fitted to appear before the presence of the Lord? and yet, notwithstanding all these undeniable effects of serious, searching sermons; and the temporary awakenings of self-condemnation, have you not almost *instantly* returned to all the gratifications of *sensual* life? Has the preacher's eloquence, or your own conviction checked *one* single day of public feasting, or wanton revelry? Has the drunkard become sober? or the dissolute, chaste? the proud man humble? the purloiner more just? Have you not continued slaves to the most vain and trifling pursuits of worldly amusement, as if you had never heard a gospel sermon preached in all your lives?

lives? Have you not, many of you (according to the strong description of the sinner's foul relapse, as set forth in holy scripture) *returned like the dog to his vomit, and as the sow to her wallowing in the mire?* If no other fruits have followed your toil and zeal for popular preachers, than your own *experience* discovers, you might as well have staid at *home*; you could not possibly have done *worse*. But it is time I should show you how you might have done a *great deal better*. By not looking up to the *man*, but to *his master*, and *your* master, you may ever assure yourselves of *sufficient grace*, to fix the truths you will always hear at church, so deeply in your mind, and heart, that they will prevent your being merely *bearers*, and not *doers* of the word. Surely you will allow that such a conduct as I have just described, is wholly inconsistent with any share of active grace, and all who cannot prove, by a visible, and continued course of purity, gravity, and sincerity, that their lives are *truly altered for the BETTER*, must give up the valuable effects of *any* preaching, upon them. From all these observations then, I naturally conclude, that the ruling cause that renders people discontented with the ordinary means of grace, which their own particular situation furnishes, is (as the Apostle complained of old) that *they have itching ears*. When our Christian churches were in many parts demolished by the profane rage of civil war, it was a glorious sight to see the zeal of the multitude for God's worship displayed in any shape. If there was no church appropriated for God's regular and
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solemn worship, it would be justifiable and incumbent on us to offer the homage of our praise and adoration, *when, and wherever* we could assemble, but under the universal blessing of undisturbed repose, with every comfortable provision for God's reasonable service, it certainly betrays a wavering turn of mind, to desert God's house in our *own* parish, although we help to *croud* it in *another*. One inevitable, and exceptionable consequence of which is this, that perhaps a larger church remains almost *deserted*, while a smaller, is rendered extremely inconvenient, and uncomfortable to the *proper congregation*, that belong to it; and much confusion and irreverent conduct, is consequently committed, without a possibility of being prevented.

But there is *another* argument that weighs considerably against the practice of running abroad for knowledge, and strengthens the plea, and benefit of serving God, where his providence has fixed our habitation. For after all, **PREACHING**, however useful, is but a *secondary* portion of public duty, on the Lord's Day; the *principal* worship of God consists in our **DEVOTIONS**, in humble supplication, and grateful praise. Herein is the peculiar beauty and value of our established form of worship. Almost every prayer is a little sermon in *itself*. In this part of the public service, we may both hear, and read the word of God, to most desirable edification, and depend upon it, my friends, they whose hearts are *not* prepared by *prayer*, are poorly qualified to profit by *any* sermons, even the very finest,
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that can be delivered. Besides, it too frequently happens, that they who are so very partial to *bear the word*, (as they term it), as to go sometimes to a great distance for that purpose, are very likely to come too late to join their fellow-christians in the *essential* duty of *public prayer*: by *repetition* of this practice, they may gradually become indifferent to the *value* of this important exercise, and content themselves with that, *less* nourishing to the soul. These remarks, directly lead me to take some further notice of the *second*, and most *alarming* plea, I purposed to consider, and which is occasionally alledged in vindication of a proceeding, I cannot recommend; namely, whether it is an *absolute lack* of *means* in any place, that justifies the too prevailing custom of employing much of the Sabbath Day in travelling after different preachers? Upon this question I shall add, that no just excuse of this kind can be urged, because all true friends of *order*, will submit most *humblly*, to that peculiar mode appointed for them, in the general disposition of divine pleasure. They will discover no turn for *will* worship by carving *favorite* methods of their *own*; and as it cannot be doubted, but that the *grace*, the *help*, or *favor* of God is equally promised to all that truly *ask* it, and faithfully use it *every where*, so it is no less certain, that every person religiously disposed, may become as good, as God would have them, by conscientiously cultivating the *means* dispensed for their improvement in a regular way: and as Moses speaking to the discontented Israelites, said, *What is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?* (Numb. xvi. 11.)

xvi. 11.) so we may as truly say, what is *any preacher*, eminent, or indifferent in natural powers? Nothing but an *instrument* in the hands of God to do *his work*, all the success depends upon the hearers *purity of will*, and the influence of *God's spirit* to enlighten, strengthen, and assist their mutual pious labors. From all that has been offered, I would infer, that a passion for *variety*, is what more generally pervades the populace, than any genuine zeal for *holiness*. *Experience* proves the *fact*; for only remove the *motive* of *curiosity*, and you shall see the same holy place as *empty* another Sunday, as it was *full* the *last*. Let a different stranger be announced, and you will find it again still *fuller* than *before*; nay, we may conclude no better principle influences the *outward* duty of very many, since the effects of such fancied excellence rarely last: for example, some scarce ever appear at church *but* on *these occasions*, and were they thoroughly persuaded of the very alarming truths sometimes conveyed to them by the mouths of *strangers*, they would certainly never desist from serving God in the best manner they could, in the *very place* where his holy word *enjoins* them to attend. In short, from the dangerous consequences of *divisions*, which are always injurious to the *bond of peace*, and never more necessary to be guarded against, than in times like *these*, which (as our gracious Sovereign's proclamation sufficiently declares) are *dreadfully alarming*; so I am induced to think, the unsettled and disorderly example attending a zeal of this description, is of more *detriment* than *benefit* to the religious ad-

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vancement of the community in general. And if people would but speak *out* ; several must confess (from their own knowledge) that repeated indulgences of this kind, tend to a habit of *idle wandering*, and *perplexed notions* in religion. And now, if you enquire to what *end*, I have said so much upon this subject ; my reason is plain, and ready : I could wish that *every* circumstance both *public* and *private*, might contribute to render us duly sensible of the certain benefits to be derived from a strict, and faithful discharge of our respective, and indispensable duties. *This*, I think is the *third* public occasion, in which I have had the happiness to assist, since I have resided among you. The *first* call upon my office, was to renew a very useful custom, which had been neglected for a great number of years before*. It was with innocent mirth, and general joy, that you attended me when I led you round the bounds of this particular district, where God hath allotted us to sojourn a while together. Strive with me, my friends, that our rejoicing may be *mutual*, when we shall meet on the *other* side this *mortal boundary*, and that it may be in the place, *where are pleasures for evermore* ; and where nothing shall interfere to discompose them. How much more glorious and desirable is the prospect, of my leading you to the realms of heavenly light, and love ; the wish of my heart, and the end of all my humble labors now towards you. The boundary we marked together *here*, is perishable, and uncertain, but *our inbe-*

* Going in procession to ascertain the true bounds of the Parish.
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ritance shall be eternal in the heavens, nor shall any limits of *time*, or *space*, confine our growing, endless happiness. The *second* test of secular obligation, which my professional engagements exacted from me, was to unite *my* best endeavours with your *own*, to support a national cause, that did honor to our *public principles*: Even *this* exertion, may evince the propriety of our zeal for still more *serious interests*. When, in defence of our *temporal* concerns, and as members of the happy government we now enjoy, many of you accompanied me, as no *less steady* members of that *Church* in which God's gracious providence hath appointed we should be born, and bred; we were then, certainly, acting, (according to the forms *established*), a *reasonable and honest service**. But how inconsistent will it appear, my brethren, if when so zealous for the *name* of our profession, we shew so little value for the *end* of God's precious blessing of so excellent a Church? And as some of us even at the hazard of our *lives*†, gave bounden testimony to our attachment for the *outward* form of worship we employ, let us not, when *no* difficulty appears, fall short of profiting by the *means*, that form supplies. Let not our neglect to serve God *in* his holy house, contradict the sincerity of our wishes, that *nothing may prevail against it*, nor our contributing to its respectable *appearance* be the *only* regard we shew it, or the *only benefit* we hope to reap from it; on the con-

* Attending the freeholders of the parish to a county election.

† Several fatal accidents having nearly taken place in consequence of the riotous proceedings at contested elections.

trary, as I freely advised such measures as tend in every sense to uphold our church on earth, suffer me likewise to assist in leading you to be faithful members of the *universal church* in Heaven, that we may reap our reward together, for having acted wisely in every point of duty. These plain, but positive instances of our too different conduct respecting *temporal*, and *eternal* things, may serve to open our eyes to our manifold deficiencies in the latter case, and convince us that unless we change our conduct, it will not profit us at *last*, whatever success the former may receive by our activity. This is the cause, my friends, of my availing myself at this time, of these particular allusions; so applicable to the occasion, and so familiar to your knowledge. As I am well convinced, that the greatest advantages may be obtained, by a regular attendance on God's holy worship, in the particular places to which people belong, I judged therefore, I could not take too much pains to shew you, that it is not always the spirit of pure, and humble religion (as some may suppose) that draws the multitude together, in other places, but often very different motives. However strenuous an advocate I am for liberty of every kind, and especially for liberty of conscience, yet I cannot refrain my opinion, that wherever the sound word of truth is delivered, so far the pure service of God is faithfully performed; and it is the fault of the people only if they remain unfruitful. Whosoever in such a place, shall neglect the proper seasons of joining in that service; whoever, through fond partiality for particular men, or doctrines,

doctrines, shall go a great way from home, to serve the Lord (even sometimes at the expence of health, and great inconvenience) when the church to which they profess to belong, is at their *very door*, however religious and serious they may be in *other* respects; in *this*, I will be bold to say, they ERR, and without the least breach of charity, we may conclude, that the influence of *prejudice*, *perverseness*, or human *weakness*, must have taken strong possession of them, before they can persevere in such a conduct.

I have no view in these observations, my brethren, to *condemn*, or dissuade persons, who *dissent* from our established form on principles of *education*, from following the maxims or customs which early habit hath taught them to believe most expedient to their instruction, or *happiness*. I only propose these general sentiments, as a professional *caution* to that particular flock, to which I am appointed overseer, not to be decoyed through the spirit of *curiosity*, to desert their *own place of worship*, at the hazard of unsettling their minds, affording a deluding example to their neighbors, and helping to separate and weaken that religious society, which it is *our biggest interest*, as wise men, *good subjects*, and *humble Christians*, to support, and increase to the *utmost of our power*. Nor would I be thought to lower the value of uncommon abilities in any man; or the necessary cultivation of the powers nature has bestowed upon them. In their peculiar posts, and providential stations, they may be eminently employed to the glory of the Divine Author, and the good of the souls committed to their care. But I

would have *all* the honor given to God. Man of himself is abundantly prone to *vanity*, without such aids to *spiritual pride*; for what has *any* man, that he hath not *received*? And who causeth one to differ from another? *All* that I mean, then, is to prevent injurious and disheartening *comparisons*; and to remove that very *false* and *dangerous* notion, that salvation is not so likely to be found, where less *blazing*, but *steady* light directs the careful Christian, in his way, as where these more brilliant Stars of Gospel information attract our admiration. What! Shall we suppose our churches are beneficial only to the weak, and aged, to cripples, and children? In regard to the *latter*, I must observe, in this place, that, as I shewed you in the morning, early habits become a second nature, so it is the most injudicious, and unwarrantable practice, to use youth early (without positive necessity requires) to roam to different churches, since thereby they acquire a dangerous custom before it is possible they can have any *reason* to make a *preference*. If partiality on *any* side, should be encouraged, it should lean to *that* which strengthens the salutary habits of their forefathers, and not to render them *wavering*, and *ungovernable*, from their very *infancy*.

These several thoughts presented themselves at different times, as I turned my mind to the subject of our late improvement of this Holy Place. I am sensible I have detained you considerably beyond my usual time of preaching, and will therefore conclude with these few following exhortations.

As God has permitted us of this generation the
honor

honor of refitting, and adorning his Holy House, let us beware that we in no shape murmur, or grudge any just portion of the bounden tribute that may fall to our respective share; lest we be found unworthy of the blessing of the Lord. We must remember that God loveth a *cheerful giver*; and especially let the nature of our present undertaking remind us, that as this outward Temple requires *occasional repair* to render it serviceable, and seemly, and at last must *finally be destroyed*, so these temples of our bodies, demand *continual care*, and *purifying*, that they may become a proper habitation for the sanctifying spirit of grace to dwell in. Let us reflect, that *they* must likewise perish, but that *both* are *now* provided us as instrumental, through God's mercy, to our securing a *better temple* in the life of glory; *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have another building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.* With this view chiefly, we should cherish all respect to this *material house*, where God has chose to *fix his name* amongst us; that when both it and we, have felt the effects of *time*, and *sure mortality*, we may come forth bright as the Sun, in the resurrection of the just; *And when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality*, we may triumph together with Christ, over sin, and death, and reign with him for ever, in light, peace, and glory. *Unto thy Name then, most Holy God, be all the praise*, by these enlivening prospects, and for all the blessed privileges, promises, and opportunities of partaking

of a better nature. O may it be our continual endeavor so to employ the *present* time, as to use every easy, regular, and sufficient means of honoring, serving, and obeying Thee. That we may be found acceptable in thy sight, and receive that blessing which thy beloved Son shall finally pronounce on all who love and fear thee. May this be the happy lot of all who hear me, and that I may be instrumental *now*, and a partaker *hereafter*, of your endless joy, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all dominion, and glory for ever and ever, Amen.

TWO SERMONS

ON

RECEIVING THE HOLY SACRAMENT

OF THE

LORD'S SUPPER.

A POSITIVE DUTY REQUIRED OF ALL CHRISTIANS.

SERMON XXVI.

FOR THE MORNING.

1 COR. xi. and part of the 24th verse.

—*This do, in remembrance of me.*

MUCH, and often, as I have discoursed to you upon this subject, (my brethren) it is natural for you to conclude, there remains scarcely any thing *new* to be offered upon it. Happy would it make me, if I could impress your minds with a deep sense of your *duty* concerning it, and thereby lead you to serious reflection, and holy resolution. But, as since the time of my first beginning the task of earnestly exhorting you to consider the nature, and comforts of this holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper, the number of communicants is somewhat *increased*, I own I am rather encouraged to proceed in my further endeavors no less for *their* benefit, than for that of all who are still careless about discharging this important duty of their Christian profession. To those who have been persuaded to an *outward* compliance with our Lord's command it is very necessary to administer *caution*, that they do not rest satisfied with their obedience,
as

as a mere *formal* service; but that they *labour earnestly* to obtain those Christian-graces which an *humble*, and *faithful* attendance upon this blessed Sacrament, is calculated to produce in their hearts. They must not be content with only *tasting* the outward visible elements, but labor to experience some *inward nourishment* from the *spiritual* application of Christ's blessing on their endeavors. They must persist in the use of the *means*, 'till by frequently commemorating the death and sufferings of their Savior, they learn to *die to sin, to live unto righteousness, and to glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ*. On the other hand, we must continue to press the great obligation that *all* are under, to obey their Lord's command, which perseverance, may happily, (in God's good time) prove instrumental to *their* conviction, who have been hitherto negligent in this respect; so that finally, (if we faint not) *all may come to the knowledge of the truth*.

A very interesting season is now at hand*, when it is customary to administer the blessed Sacrament of Christ's body and blood: a season when no *real Christians* will keep away from the Lord's Table, if they can *possibly attend*. And as there is sufficient time for the due preparation of all who have a *just sense* of the *nature* and *necessity* of this Christian sacrifice, and who are *godly disposed* towards it, I hope to have a comfortable assurance of your grateful sense of that important event to be celebrated next

* Easter.

Sunday.

Sunday. But on this point I shall have occasion to speak more fully in its proper place.—

I shall strive to make the arguments I am about to advance for your instruction at this time (my brethren) as *clear*, and *convincing*, as possible; by adapting them to the understanding of the most unlearned hearer; and placing them in such striking light, as I hope (with God's blessing) may take effect, in leaving the most ignorant and thoughtless, *without excuse*, if they still hold out against their Blessed Master's invitation: if they still neglect the easy, and happy opportunities he is pleased to afford them, to become acquainted with every necessary information, relative to this grand article of their Christian faith.

And to this end, I think proper to mention; before I proceed further; that for the encouragement of all who are religiously inclined, and perhaps not equally capable with some, in receiving so much benefit as might be wished, from a *ser* discourse of this kind; that I shall keep myself disengaged the *whole week following*, from six o'clock in the evening till eight, for the purpose of discoursing with any of my parishioners who may entertain *scruples* on this subject, which they wish to have *removed*; and of affording them every degree of information, and satisfaction, they can desire, to assist their coming to the Lord's table, with *security* and *comfort*, to their own minds. And here I beg leave to address myself particularly to any present, who though they have been publicly confirmed in the solemn vows they made at baptism, have never yet partook

partook of that holy rite, for which the *other* ceremony is designed to *qualify*, and *prepare* them. Several years have now elapsed, since many openly professed themselves members of Christ's Church, and yet even to this day, they have not proved the *truth* of their profession, by giving the serious testimony required, to shew that they *do* belong to Christ. Every one of common sense, must see, that to *defer* doing this, is to *trifle* with their Redeemer, and their own salvation; and therefore I feel it an incumbent duty, to warn, and press all such, to delay no longer, but to take the earliest opportunity of making their peace with God for their past neglect, and by future obedience, to assure his favor: for what can young people expect will become of them, without it? According to the tenets of the Church of which you are members, you have been taught to acknowledge from your infancy, that the graces or benefits to be derived from a proper participation of this Sacrament, are necessary to the salvation of *all Christians*: and if so, they can be accounted but *half* Christians, even as to *outward forms*, who wilfully refuse to fulfil the declarations they have so positively and frequently made. I do therefore most earnestly request all such to weigh the importance of this charge, and to let me have the happiness of becoming instrumental to their advancement in real piety, and Christian order. I *repeat* this invitation, because notwithstanding the serious and needful exhortation I so often deliver on this subject, I would not be accessory to the ensnaring ignorant, and inconsiderate

persons, into a *hasty*, and dangerous compliance with a command, which if irreverently observed, might tend to *barden*, instead of *bumbling* their hearts. Let such as wish to become Christians INDEED, by all means give this *becoming* proof of their calling: let them communicate as *speedily*, and *frequently* as in their *power*: but let them at the same time, be advised to *understand* what they are about, that is, to engage God's blessing on their design by a devout humble and penitent frame of mind, and such a due degree of information, which every sensible person will see expedient to be obtained.

Having judged this a proper introduction to the following discourse, I shall now proceed to convince you of the *necessity* and *benefit* of receiving this Holy Sacrament; and of the great sin of continuing indifferent, as to this most essential Christian duty. The other principal points I shall endeavor to establish will be these. To give this ordinance a greater share of consequence, than can be expected from a merely *formal* act of religious service; and at the same time to remove every false, and improper notion concerning it. I hope to make you sensible, that we are not to look upon this ceremony in the light of a CHARM, that is to make us wise, and holy at *once*, or *irresistibly* so; but that it is to be performed, as a real *means* of grace, acting in as rational consequence, upon every mind duly disposed for improvement, as any *other* precept enjoined in Holy Scripture: that it is an action whereby you may receive, what as weak creatures, you hourly stand in need of, viz. God's help, and favor.

favor. And I believe it is almost needless to add, that *without* these, you will never be able to please him, and of course can never *be saved*; can never enter into the *joy of your Lord*; or in other words, can never be admitted into *his* presence, *where are pleasures for evermore*.

But that you may reap every possible advantage from these general heads of instruction, I will reduce them to more distinct order.

First, I will shew you, that to receive the Lord's Supper being a *positive command*, as such, it exacts *indispensable obedience*. The command is clearly contained in these words, *THIS DO*.

Secondly, I will explain to you, the interesting signification of the next words, *IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME*. And

Thirdly, I shall conclude with a few plain arguments for your consideration, as may assist in persuading you to become more exemplary in this duty for the future.

Obedience to any command; performance of any ceremony; or the application of any *means* that is likely to forward your principal *happiness*, and prevent your greatest *misery*, is surely matter of the deepest concern, and highly worthy your observance. I am so truly anxious, my brethren, that you should not lose the advantage of such valuable help towards accomplishing your Christian warfare, that in every discourse to you upon this important ordinance of our holy religion, I use my utmost endeavors that no difficulties shall present themselves from *hard terms*, or too profound an

examination of the subject; happily, *such* a method is no ways necessary for its being duly understood, though it may, nevertheless, be sometimes employed with great propriety for the information, and conviction of those, who having received an education requiring a more *refined address*, are capable of profiting by learned enquiries, and applications. I shall therefore treat of it *now*, as is natural to suppose our Blessed Lord at first *intended*, so, that it might be received with safety, and comfort, by the most *unlearned disciple*: for as Christ came to preach the Gospel to the poor, we must also *so* speak, that the poor may *understand*; and the greater number of them not being able even to *read*, much less are they qualified to discover the truth, when delivered in terms *above* their apprehension. Still as they must be considered in the character of *Christians*, it is very certain, that they are equally bound to use every Christian rite, or precept, our Blessed Master has recorded in his Gospel. As they have souls to be saved, they are as much concerned to obtain a due knowledge of this holy Sacrament, as the richest and highest, of their fellow-christians.

We will begin, then, by proving, that the institution, ordinance, or religious ceremony, which we commonly call the *Lord's Supper*, is a POSITIVE COMMAND; and as such, lays an *indispensable obligation*, on *all*, who wish to be *Christians indeed* TO OBEY IT. I believe, the most ignorant person living, must be assured, that Christ would never have appointed any rite that was *needless* in his Church; for God can do nothing *in vain*. Every thing that

he enjoineth, or alloweth, abounds in holy, and gracious purposes for the creature's good, and his own glory. We may safely apply our Lord's own words to *this*, as to every *other* precept delivered to his disciples; *what I say unto you, I say unto all*. The command, likewise, appears evidently expressed in these words of the text, **THIS DO**: and the *reason* why we are to do it, is equally binding upon us; it is to be performed in *remembrance of Christ*: now if it was the interest of the disciples, who were immediately *called* by our Lord, who *lived* with him, and who had so long enjoyed all the extraordinary advantages of his constant, and personal *instruction*; if, I say, it was required of *them*, to keep up the remembrance of their Blessed Master's death and sufferings, surely, it must be much more incumbent upon every Christian in *after* ages, to do the *same*: because the longer we live from the time of Christ's coming in the flesh, and the more faithless, and wicked the world *grows*, the more we require every help to preserve us from degenerating in our Christian principles. No sound believer, can entertain a doubt, but that Jesus Christ (who knew all things;) who was *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*, did *purposely* appoint this memorial of himself, as an easy, and proper test of proving the sincerity of his future followers; and as an effectual method likewise, of conveying to them, the grace and help, they might from time to time require, to keep their faith in him alive, and to strengthen them in all holiness. And accordingly, it is the professed opinion of our excellent Church

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(whose

(whose doctrines are warranted by the express language of Scripture,) that this sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is **GENERALLY NECESSARY TO SALVATION**, as well as that of Baptism.

Now it is very self-evident reasoning, that what is necessary for *one* Christian, must be so for *all*, because *Christ died for all*. What will tend to assist the *advanced* Christian, or (as our Litany speaks) "to strengthen such as do stand, to comfort and help the weak-hearted, and raise up them that fall," must, of natural consequence, become proportionally expedient to those who most need knowledge, and support; viz. the ignorant and unconverted. And it is equally undeniable, that they who expect any benefit from Christ's death, must pay becoming honor to **ALL** his ordinances. What then, my brethren, is the certain effect of your keeping from the Lord's table, but clearly, that you deny, or dispute, the *necessity of his commands*; and in so doing, you can no more be justly said to belong to *Him*, than you do strictly to the very Church in which you were born; because she proposes this sacrament to you as a *mark* of your belonging to Christ, and being in christian communion with each other. All, therefore, who hold out against their Blessed Master's gracious invitation to this holy feast, declare directly, by their conduct, that *they do not love him*, for he expressly says, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*: Again, *He who doth my words, he it is that loveth me*. Hear it then in his own language (my friends) **THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME**: and as these were in a manner his

last, his *dying* words, the commandment ought to produce a more extraordinary influence in engaging us to fulfil it. (2.) But we have a farther argument to prove that Christ ordained this ceremony as a POSITIVE LAW, attending his religion, and that is contained in the account of its *institution*, as related by St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 23. For though he was not one of the Apostles *present* at the *original* institution of the Lord's supper, yet being chosen for so great a work as that of ministering the gospel to the gentile world, our Blessed Lord vouchsafed even to reveal *particularly* to HIM, the *form* and *purpose* of this holy ceremony. Now this we may reasonably conclude, he would *not* have done, had it not been *absolutely necessary to the work of salvation*. Farther, by this new, and miraculous communication of it to St. Paul, our Lord sufficiently guarded against any possible *mistake*, concerning its general use, or the *manner* and *design* of it: and when the Corinthian converts were guilty of a most gross abuse of this divine appointment, the Apostle corrects their error in this plain instruction relative to the ordinance: *For I have received of the Lord*, (says he) *that which I also delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus, the same night that he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said (to them all) Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup (that is, the wine contained in it) is the New Testament (the memorial of it) in my blood. This do as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* By this plain,

plain, and very full relation, it is evident, past dispute, that Christ intended this *positive command*, to extend to *all his followers*: for it is very remarkable, that the appointment of this holy ordinance should make a part of that *immediate revelation*, with which Christ honoured this Apostle, and which greatly strengthens all our other arguments for continuing it in the church*; because, even had any of the other Apostles *mistaken* what passed at the last passover (*after* which, this ceremony was first appointed) we may rest well assured, Christ would have rather *corrected* any *error* of theirs in this *fresh* declaration of his will to St. Paul, than have given such an authority for *continuing* Christians in it: He would certainly have delivered *any* useful *precaution*, on so serious, and extraordinary an occasion; and had not *obedience* been *absolutely* required from EVERY CHRISTIAN, He would have excepted their *condition*, or their *case*, that so they might not *ignorantly offend*, but afford a saving plea for their omission. Besides, it may be farther profitable to inform you here, that this epistle to the Corinthians seems to have been written *before* any of the *gospels* appeared, in which the formal history of the sacrament is recorded. Nay, the Apostle in a manner intimates (in Gal. i. 17.) that when he wrote it, he had not even *seen* any *other* Apostle, so that it is clear, he could not be prejudiced by any relation concerning the Lord's supper from *them*; and *their* accounts related after, agreeing

* See Dr. Doddridge on this point.

exactly with *this* delivered by a *particular miracle*, secures us every way, as to the obligation of this law upon all ranks, and degrees of Christians, to the end of time.

Abundant *other* arguments might be brought to confirm this fact, but as every reasonable, and well-disposed person, must be satisfied with what has now been said upon the subject, I shall conclude this first division of my discourse, with just repeating, that as Christ (it is most certain) delivered this *positive command*: as he declared *all* must keep it, and that for the purpose, or as a *sign of shewing forth his death till he came* (or in other words, that every Christian should, for *himself*, remember his Saviour *all his days*, and all ages of Christians were to do the same, *till his coming again* to judgment, (when the use of the *memorial* would be needless, because of his *actual* presence) so, unless a man can satisfy himself, that he is a good Christian, *without* keeping *any* of Christ's commandments, neither can he deserve to be called a christian *at all*, if he wilfully flights, and neglects the very *last*, and kind command, his Saviour gave, while living upon earth: For he who is guilty of *one*, is guilty of *all* (says St. James;) and people are more culpable for breaking *this*, than any *other*, because it is so easy in itself, and as being beside that extraordinary *means* of grace, which Christ did *purposely* contrive, to enable weak and backsliding sinners to keep the *others*, and save them from eternal death,

Thus

Thus having established the proof that the receiving of the Holy Sacrament is *positively commanded*, we do at the same time enforce the unavoidable duty of *obedience*, because the authority of Christ is in itself an indispensable rule, which no real Christian will ever venture to oppose.

Secondly : let us now proceed to examine the meaning of the words which follow in the text ; *In remembrance of ME.* They contain the *cause, design, or end* of the command, and relate to the first general head I mentioned, and a just sense of them, will prevent you from esteeming this holy ordinance as a mere *formal ceremony*. We are here enjoined by our Blessed Master to do this act *in remembrance of HIM, and as he spoke, as never man spake* (in point of truth, and unerring direction) we may be certain, he did not employ these words, without a very significant, and profitable *design*.

To *remember* a thing, in the common acceptation of the phrase, is to call to mind, a past event, or person ; it is to bring to our recollection, that some particular circumstance happened, or persons lived, long since : But no Christian can be so desperately *dull, and ignorant*, as to suppose *this is all* that our Lord intended, when he said, *do this in remembrance of ME.* Let us only expose the absurdity of *such* a notion, by the sense and latitude in which we should use the expression, if it related to *any singular event of our own lives*, or to the revival of the character of any one we have *dearly loved*. Should we be content with barely *remembering*, that such

things, or persons had once *existed*, and there *stop*? No, surely; if the person was very near and dear to us, we should not be satisfied, with just recollecting, that he once lived on earth, but we should fondly *dwell* upon those virtues, and accomplishments, that occasioned our attachment to him. If he happened to be a *benefactor* also, we should as naturally esteem his memory from a sense of the *benefits* we had received from him; so that you cannot avoid perceiving, but that something *more* is implied in the words, *in remembrance of ME*, than the single recollection, that Christ lived and died upon this earth; for depend upon it, if we remember our Saviour in no *better way* than this, the frequent acknowledging that *any* celebrated character *whatever*, was once in *being*, will equally profit us in a religious point of view. The act of memory must therefore carry us *farther*, when we perform this holy ceremony as a *memorial* of the LORD OF LIFE. We must take the words, *do this in remembrance of ME*, in the *full spiritual* sense that they will bear, and which, indisputably, they were intended to convey, by Him that spake them. If then, we indulge a serious meditation in this place, we shall naturally be led to consider the peculiar *office*, and *dignity* of the person here *to be remembered*. The mind of a *Christian* will furnish him with some such thoughts as these.—Christ commands me, *to do this act in remembrance of HIM*; I must therefore revert to the holy life He led for my *example*; the bitter sufferings He endured, to teach me *patience*, and *resignation*; and the cruel death He underwent,

derwent to purchase *life eternal* for all who *believe in Him*. The original *cause* of his death will then present itself; and that was *SIN*. He, *who knew no sin, became sin for us*, that is, He paid the debt that was *due* to it, on *our account*. He satisfied God's justice, that mankind might be reconciled to their heavenly Father. The Christian's meditations, will proceed farther, in this strain; As I am a *sinner*, the Blessed Jesus died therefore for *me*, together with all who were subject to the curse, through *disobedience*. Christ, the Eternal Son of God, the glory of the Father, the express image of his person, forsook all the joys of Heaven; condescended to take upon him human nature; to be born an helpless infant; to wear the form of a servant; to suffer the infirmities of childhood; the miseries of a low condition; the perverseness and reproaches of sinners; the ingratitude and persecution of his *enemies*; and at the last, to die a most painful, and disgraceful death; and all this, that my fallen nature might be *changed*, in order to prepare me for the enjoyment of *endless happiness*! What a deadly nature must sin possess, that could be atoned no *other* way! What gratitude should such astonishing love excite in me, towards so powerful, and merciful a friend? Can I forbear complying with *any* thing he advises, without deserving to be *forsoaken* by Him? These, my brethren, are *some* of the most natural circumstances, that a *due* remembrance of Christ's death, will furnish; and they are sufficient to point out to you, that *such* a remembrance is required, as will render the receiving

receiving of this holy sacrament more than a *merely formal act of religious duty*; which was what I promised to shew you. Farther, if we let these words work upon our souls: DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME, when applied upon the principle of religious love, will draw our hearts to Christ. Instead of flighting his gracious invitation, and much less never obeying it, these words will make us rejoice at every opportunity of approaching His holy table. When people duly weigh, what must have been the consequence, if Christ had NOT died to save them; that after having lived a natural term of years, subject to *sin, pain, and death*, they must finally have been condemned to their *own place*; to the dwellings of rebellious spirits, and for ever excluded from God's presence, it cannot fail to magnify the surprising mercy of God towards mankind. How much must He have loved the *creature*, and hated *sin*, to have wrought such a work for their redemption, as causeth wonder, even among his own bright host of perfect spirits. When we reflect, that this Blessed Saviour hath not only rescued us from the just, and unavoidable sentence due to a depraved and sinful nature; but has obtained, that we shall *be called the sons of God*, and inherit happiness beyond all possibility of description, or even *thought*; when we are told by him, who had a foretaste of future bliss, *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him*; shall we refuse to obey the gracious commands of such a *Master, Advocate, and Friend*?

Friend? It should seem that our *own interest* would prompt us to take such steps, as will assure us so blessed a portion: for what proportion is there betwixt what the *best* of us can do on earth, and what we are taught to expect in Heaven? It should seem that neither trouble, nor disgrace; neither torture, nor death itself, should prevent our closing with every means that can qualify us for such perfection, and undeserved exaltation of our nature. But alas! we are so grossly degenerated, that *though we have eyes we see not, though we have ears we hear not*. Christ well knew, the various infirmities of our mortal nature, and from united wisdom, and compassion, ordained this very ceremony to assist in bringing us to such a sense of our *absolute dependence upon him* for life, as might reasonably prevail upon us to accept his offers both of pardon for past sin, and future help in time of need, and that upon the kindest terms, viz. our obedience to a plain and easy command; sanctioned by his Divine authority; enforced by the most affecting circumstances; and abounding in present benefit, and the most glorious promises. If all this will not touch the heart of offending, helpless, undeserving creatures, tottering on the very brink of everlasting ruin; it is difficult which most to wonder at, and condemn, their foul *ingratitude*, or *stubborn folly*.

There only remains, at this time, to submit to your consideration a few familiar arguments, which may assist in persuading you to comply with this essential duty of your christian calling, and these will close the *first* division of the subject, which

which I have treated in the manner I judged most likely to make impression on you.

It having been shewn you, that this holy ceremony stands in the Christian Church as a **POSITIVE LAW**, delivered by the *Author* of our religion; you must consequently grant, that whosoever wilfully refuses to *obey* it, or is indifferent about removing the idle scruples he may have cherished through *ignorance*, or *prejudice*; he can have no just pretensions to the title of a *real Christian*. For no man who has any sound knowledge of the very *first* principles of his faith, can avoid being sensible, that if he has not an interest in the benefits of Christ's death, he cannot be saved from the *punishment* of his sins, or become partaker of the *divine nature*: and a very little thought will further convince him, that if he rejects the *means* that Savior has provided for both these blessed ends, he is not worthy of *his love*, but hath already *condemned himself*. Now this directs us to the *first*, and most important argument I shall propose to you for complying with Christ's command to receive this Sacrament in *remembrance of him*; which is, that if we are *ashamed of him before men*, in *this adulterous and sinful generation*, (which all assuredly are, who *despise his ordinances*) *He will be ashamed of us before his Father*, when he cometh to judge the world in righteousness, with all *his holy angels*. This single consideration, would be enough (if seriously attended to), to correct the long continued disobedience of the most thoughtless; and produce an immediate discharge of bounden duty. But in this, as well as in every other

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act of christian obligation, we must not expect *conversion* to take place before *conviction*, and as rational creatures, we may reason from our own conduct, and feelings, in *other* respects, to decide as to the wisdom and necessity of our proceedings, *even in religious matters.*

Now if an earthly benefactor had left us an estate, upon condition of our frequently using a *sign* that would recal the history of his *kind regard* for us; is it likely that we should ever miss an opportunity of celebrating the *remembrance* of his particular bounty? and if this benefaction was to receive *increase*, the oftener we gratefully declared the praises of our friend; is it not certain, we should be most earnest in *repeating* our obedience to his commands? Let us illustrate the unworthiness of a *non-compliance* with our heavenly Benefactor's last commands, by some *other* familiar case. If a very poor man laboured under a grievous malady, and a most skilful doctor was to promise him a certain cure, upon his taking a very easy, pleasant prescription, do you think he would refuse the remedy because it was *neither difficult, or costly*? But if he *did*, would he not deserve to suffer, and die? Again—if any of us were made acquainted with a treasure in the earth, and our hopes of being possessed of it, depended wholly on our unwearied industry in digging after it, could we be said either truly to *desire* or *deserve* it, if we declined this *only* method of obtaining it? Could we expect ever to get to the *bottom* of the ground, if we refused even to open the *surface*? These are plain, and easy applications, to the case before us,
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as to the motives that would govern us in *worldly* matters. It is indisputable, that the principle which should actuate our pursuits of *heavenly* things, should be so much *stronger*, as the object is more *valuable*; for what is the utmost that earthly *friendship, riches, health, or life* can promise, in comparison of the *love of God through Christ*. *They must all perish, but this will endure for ever*. Indeed, if we had them *all* (*without* this one thing needful) what would they profit us in the end? In two words, what would tempt a man though *he could gain the whole world, and was to lose his own soul?* for what can a man give in exchange for his soul? Hold out no longer then, my brethren, against the choicest blessings Christ has in store for you. Cheerfully, and wisely, accept the *ready means* he has appointed for your recovery from sin now, and death eternal. Defer no longer, to obey his loving call, his bounteous offer of free, and plenteous redemption, even to the *undeserving*. Surely there must be some very powerful cause, some *unconquerable* deficiency, that can suffer you to continue blind to your *greatest happiness*, and dead to your *clearest duty*! THERE IS, and I will tell it you, my brethren, IT IS WANT OF FAITH. Had you faith, but as a grain of mustard seed, you could not resist the pressing arguments which both *reason* and *Revelation* present, to make you sensible of your error in this respect. Yet remember, that without faith, it is impossible to please God. 'Alas! you would trust to man in temporal affairs, but you will not believe in God for the things of
life

‘ *life eternal*, what an affront is this to HIM? What ‘ woeful injury to ourselves?’ Pray then for FAITH, my friends, to HIM who hath obtained this, and every necessary gift for those who ask in *sincerity*. But neither *this*, or any *other* grace, will ever be the portion of those, who obstinately *refuse* to use the *means* of grace, and wilfully despise Christ’s *positive commands*.

There remains much more, my brethren, for your instruction on this important subject; but time obliges me to defer it ‘till we meet again. May God’s grace accompany the present humble labor for your good! may He bless what has now been delivered for your *conviction*, and fill your minds with holy resolutions, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, &c.

SERMON XXVII.

PART II.

The true notion of receiving the Lord's Supper UNWORTHILY. An exhortation to Christians not to refrain communicating, through false and frivolous objections.

I COR. xi. 27, 28, 29.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

IN my discourse this morning, my brethren, upon the necessity laid on all christians to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a proof of their faith in Christ Jesus their Savior, I grounded my charge upon this *fact*, that the performance of the duty was required of us in consequence of a POSITIVE COMMAND, and that, not barely *implied*, but absolutely *expressed* in these words, THIS DO *in remembrance of me*: and this, according to my humble judgment, was the *first* point to be established in a course of regular exhortation to fulfil

so essential a portion of our Christian service. But when unhappily it appears that the arguments drawn from this leading obligation, have not sufficient force of themselves, to bring about a compliance with the *rule*, then, our next obvious study will be, to endeavor to *remove* the *prejudices* and *objections* that people may have collected, to excuse themselves from shewing the obedience required of them, to this grand article of their religion. And lest that should be the case of any present, I have made choice of this *particular text*, because the words contain the most *plausible plea* for the fears of many on this subject. But it is a false alarm, and if this passage of scripture can be cleared from its fancied discouragement (which I think may very easily be effected to the satisfaction of all who are truly desirous of understanding, and fulfilling every Christian obligation) then, the more ordinary excuses will fall to the ground of course; and we may hope, to see people become anxious, to conform to their Savior's divine commands.

The method I shall take with this second division of my subject, will be

(1.) First; To mention some of the most common objections, and by a fair examination of their weight, to endeavor to remove their unhappy *effect*: at the same time, submitting to the *conscience* of all, who have hitherto been negligent respecting this duty, whether there are not *other* reasons that occasion their disobedience; *these*, we shall shew to be the most dangerous hinderances, because it is *against* their
their

their *power*, and fatal consequence, that this very Sacrament was first appointed.

(2.) If I am so happy as to lessen the *influence* of your objections, you will then be better prepared to receive the encouragement of the *benefits* to be derived from your *obedience* in this article; which is the second thing I mentioned as relating to the other general head of this discourse; namely, that the institution was not intended to act upon us as a CHARM, but as an *ordinary means of grace*.

(3.) Lastly, I shall speak to the doubts of many, concerning a *safe* and proper *preparation*; so that they may come to their Master's table, with the most comfortable hope of a kind, and profitable reception.

I hope I shall be able to manage these several points so as to be plainly *understood*, (towards which, at least, I shall use my utmost *endeavors*) in which case, I shall have done all that so humble an instrument can possibly effect, and (as in every other exertion of frail mortals) the *increase* must be left to God's blessing upon your own pious resolutions, and future care.

I shall begin, then, with an attempt to remove the grand objection that is said to have terrified so many from receiving the Holy Sacrament. The Apostle indeed asserts in the text, *That whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall eat and drink DAMNATION to himself*. Now all the terror lies in these two words, *unworthily* and *damnation*; what he means by *unworthily* in this place, is very clear, from the preceding con-

tents of his reproach against these Corinthians. They made no distinction between their common meals, and the receiving the signs of the Lord's Body broken, and Blood shed for them; *One was hungry, and another drunken.* They made the table of the Lord a scene of gluttony, and drunkenness, and discovered a total inattention to the *design* of the institution, as a meeting of rich and poor in common, to profess their dependance on Christ's merits, and mediation for them, and to receive the outward signs or pledges of his grace, in pious communion with each other, as belonging to the *same Lord*; and all equally requiring his help under their different trials, and temptations. Well, therefore, might the Apostle call this, eating and drinking *unworthily*, and not discerning, (that is, losing sight of) the Lord's Body. But this their unworthy conduct, (however exceptionable,) can be no discouragement to any Christian present, to abstain from the Lord's table, because you must be sensible, it is impossible any opportunity of *such* unworthiness can exist in our manner of celebrating this holy ceremony. As therefore, there can be no danger of your coming *thus* unworthily, neither can there be any of the dreadful consequence attending it. Namely, *of eating or drinking your own damnation.* But for your farther satisfaction on this point, even this last tremendous word, need not alarm you, however justly it might have been applied to these most profligate Corinthians. The *cause* of its raising fear, is natural, until the apprehension is removed; for DAMNATION is a word we constantly

constantly employ to signify the condition of *eternal punishment*, but I can assure you, (my brethren) it is not used, in this passage, in *that* sense. The original word in the Greek language, means *judgment* in this place, (*temporal* visitation only) as is most clearly proved, from the following inference of the Apostle. *For this cause*, says he, (that is, your not discerning the Lord's Body, your not receiving this holy Sacrament with a due sense of its *design*, and in a becoming manner) *many are weak, and sickly among you, and many sleep*; that is, God visits you with various judgments, or bodily distempers; *some* of them bringing you even to the *grave*. And *why* did God do so? Doubtless, in mercy to awaken them to *repentance*: and instead of inflicting *damnation* upon them, in its *irrevocable sense*, to keep them *from* it, to punish *the body for the good of the soul*. So that no penitent sinner; no humble, and broken hearted Christian, need entertain the smallest doubt, that such *unworthiness*, or that such a *judgment*, can belong to *them*; much less *eternal damnation*, when they are striving in the *best manner* they are able, to *obey* their Lord's commands; and to use the means of defeating the power of sin and malice of the Devil, by yielding to which, we alone expose ourselves to *eternal punishment*. It is the excess of ignorance and folly, to suspect any thing of this kind; nay it is blasphemy against God's *truth*, and *mercy*, who *willeth not the death of his creatures*, and hardly would have rendered that *very ceremony* a *snare* to them, which he *purposely appointed* for their surest *preservation*. Sufficient, I trust, has now been advanced, to quiet the mind

of every sincere believer concerning *this objection*. But here, a very natural enquiry presents itself; viz. whether a person may in no *other* sense but that above, be said to come *unworthily* to the holy Sacrament. By resolving this question fairly, we shall contribute farther, to deprive the other objection of any unhappy influence upon the minds of wavering, or timid people.

A person, then, does certainly come *unworthily* when (1.) he will neither endeavor to understand the *nature* and *end* of this plain command; or (2.) when, though he has sufficient knowledge of his duty, he wilfully *abuses* it, and *holds the truth in unrighteousness*. But this depends upon a man's *own self*, and never can be made a reasonable objection for *abstaining* from the holy Sacrament. To make this more plain to you: *Faith*, it is said, *cometh by hearing*; and *hearing by the word of God*. Now if I have every opportunity afforded me of *learning my duty*, and I will not *accept* of it, but think barely appearing at the Lord's table, and using an outward ceremony, without any knowledge of its *meaning*, will be accepted by a wise, and holy God; this is SUPERSTITION. This would be in one sense to come *unworthily*. This is attributing virtue to *what*, which can convey *none*. It is building upon an *outward form*; and, instead of an act of *faith*, which must be grounded on reasonable *hope*, and conditional promises, it is to consider the ceremony in the light of a mere CHARM. Such an attendance at the Lord's table, might as justly be termed profitable *obedience*, as coming to church, and *slapping the*

the whole time, could reasonably be accounted a *religious worship*. Neither could it possibly be supposed to do a person *any good*; but, as being a most scandalous mockery of God's *presence*, and *appointment*, must certainly expose any person so guilty to his displeasure. Now this need not be the case of any one who hears me, because abundant opportunities of *learning* your duty, and daily invitations to accept them, are most sincerely offered you. But in the *other* case, a man becomes more guilty still; for 2dly if a person comes merely from *appearance of good order*; obeying the *positive command* through conviction of the *obligation* on him, but continuing dead to the *spirit* of it, that is, without any earnest *wish*, or *endeavor* to *forsake* his sins; without any proper sense of the punishment *due* to them; without heartily *confessing* them, and without feeling that they *necessarily* must destroy his soul and body in hell, if he wilfully *cherishes*, and *continues* in them: *that* person, I say, certainly comes *unworthily*, in a *dangerous* sense of the word. But this again affords no just objection to the holy Sacrament, nor any manner of excuse for those who *neglect* receiving it, because it was instituted, for a very different purpose (to convey *blessing*, instead of *condemnation*) though it may be *abused* and rendered *fruitless*, just as every other merciful provision may be dishonored by ungodly men.

But none need be at a loss to escape any danger of this kind, because the Apostle admonishes all Christians in the text, how effectually to *avoid* it: and that is, by *examining themselves*, and so let them eat

of that bread, and drink of that cup. Now if people do this *conscientiously*, there can be no *fear* of error. If a man thinks seriously, or indeed thinks *at all*, he will not come in utter ignorance of what he is about; or with a fixed *intention* of living in *known sin*. If, upon such examination, he finds himself at a loss for some satisfactory *information* on any point, he will readily apply, where he may get needful *instruction*. If he finds no desire to *amend* his life, or correct the failings of his disposition, he will not be inclined to *come at all*, so that a man cannot receive *unworthily* in these instances, unless it is his own *wilful purpose* so to do. I am thus particular in this place, for *their* sakes, who are apt to be oppressed with needless *doubts*, and *fears* on the subject, and to shew them, that this cannot be *their* case; to which I shall speak more *fully*, under the article of a due *preparation*, the want of which is one of the usual excuses with well-meaning people, for abstaining from this duty.

Let us now proceed to consider a few of the most plausible *objections* that people in *general* make, in order to vindicate their neglect of attending upon this holy ordinance, which is the pledge of Christ's love; the required test of their grateful obedience; the sure, and peculiar *means* of receiving every blessing he has promised us. Upon strict enquiry, I think all their excuses will appear grounded on an entire mistake as to the *nature* and *design* of the institution.

First; *some* allege, that hurry of business and the exceptionable company particular callings may
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occasionally expose them to, render them wholly unqualified for so serious a ceremony. This can supply no plea for neglect, unless we suppose the holy sacrament was ordained only for certain classes of men, and not for *others*; whereas we profess to believe IT GENERALLY NECESSARY FOR ALL *Christians*. Hazardous employments, *publicans*, and *sinners*, there were, in our Savior's time, and ever will be; and the very *design* of this ordinance is to guard men from the danger to which they are subjected by a promiscuous intercourse in the world. But what do men *confess*, under such an excuse as *this*? Why, plainly, that they *do wrong*, and are content to *continue* it. Some professions, and ways of gaining a livelihood, it is true, lead *more* to vice, than *others*, but in proportion as they *do* so, it becomes us to use the *most effectual means* to check the *mischiefs*; however, no one will dare assert, that in *any walk* of life whatever, he is positively *compelled* to violate the laws of *justice*, or the bounds of *virtue*; a very slight acquaintance with God's word, will teach him *better*. But what is the *further consequence* of the former mode of reasoning? Why, that if a man is *resolved* to go such lengths, as he *knows* will displease his Maker, he is as *unfit* to come to CHURCH, or to PRAY, as to receive the Sacrament: for what is the *design* or *end* of coming to *Church*, or using *prayer*, but to obtain that strength and assistance we have not in *ourselves*, to correct our evil dispositions, and to reform our lives. Now the Holy Sacrament has the very same object: but then it is a rite peculiar to our Christian faith; which the Divine Founder

Founder of our religion has been pleased to appoint as an essential part of our duty; as a public test of our love to him; and as an *additional*, and *extraordinary means* of obtaining all those precious promises which he knows our feeble nature absolutely requires, to keep us steady to our *other* pious exercises. In short, by *outward and visible signs* of that sacrifice, by which alone we can be reconciled to God, to make the strongest impression of our obligation to obey him cheerfully in all things. Further; by holding arguments of the above description, we affirm that Providence has placed his creatures in such a situation, that they must *necessarily* sin, because their particular occupation unfits them to employ the *best means* of grace. The folly, and wickedness of *such* excuses, need only to be mentioned, to *condemn* them. Very different is our conduct with regard to our *persons*; the more likely they are to be *endangered*, the greater precaution we take for their *protection*, and why should we not deal as wisely by our *souls*?

It is no uncommon thing to see people ready enough, nay *anxious*, to partake of this holy ceremony when they come to *die*, who never received it *all their life*; and what do they declare by this, but that they have no just notion of the ordinance? They must consider it as a mere superstitious charm, and formal passport. If they truly believe it to be *necessary*, or that it will do them any *good* at *one* time, it must be equally profitable at *another*. It cannot change its *nature* and *effect*; but it certainly was appointed for the *living* principally, and not the

the dying. If a man can live a strictly Christian life *without* it, it must be superfluous as to any essential virtue at his *departure*; on the contrary, its use is to *prepare* men to die, by affording them the *means* of living well, and not as an idle ceremony that can atone in a moment for years of wilful disobedience, and the neglect of the *real* benefits it is calculated to convey to us.

Let us now attend to the main principle that moves people to offer such trifling excuses, and silly evasions, in a matter of such weighty consequence as the improvement of their lives, and the salvation of their souls. We may safely appeal to the consciences of all who continue disobedient to their Lord's command, whether the true reason, is *not* the *hardness of their hearts*. It is not in general, that people are kept away by any natural, or valuable fear of *doing wrong by coming*, but they are afraid of *doing right*. That is, they are afraid they must part with their *beloved sins*. The devil, (who is as earnest, that *none* should enter the joys of heaven, as God is, that *all* men should be *saved*) is ever industrious to suggest to the vicious, and worldly minded, such arguments as these. While I am *young*, or engaged in particular employments, I am subject to many temptations which are natural to my *years*, and *station*, and which I could wish to *indulge*, for they procure me certain *pleasures* and *advantages*, I am unwilling to *give up*. If I receive this holy Sacrament, I must resolve to *part* with these, or anger God *still more*. When I have done with *them*, or they with *me*, it will be *safer* for me to attend upon

upon this serious ceremony of the Christian religion. Thus, men sin against *conviction*. They become insensibly, more and more enslaved by the devil's snare; for hereby they provoke God to *forsake them*; and they are too blind to perceive, that though they *should live* to leave off certain vices, which constitution, or condition no longer tempt them to commit; yet the mind may be so corrupted by habits of impurity, and intemperance, as to render the sinner doubtful of the *value* of his repentance, from the occasional, and torturing symptoms which lurk in his infected nature, and thus his last, and only remedy, is often changed from *comfort*, to *despair*. So terrible a state, should urge us continually to curb those sins which *do most easily beset us*, lest they gain such head, as to become our *present*, and *eternal* tormentors. But the *general* consequence of people indulging sin of any kind, is, that the heart becomes *more hardened*, till at last instead of relinquishing the pursuit (in case God spares them to riper years) they become more indifferent to this particular means of grace, and they go out of the world without having accepted the gracious offer of mercy so frequently proposed to them; and with a total contempt of the most solemn command enjoined to every Christian, by the Divine Author, and finisher of their faith. How such unhappy persons can expect to face their Savior, at the dread day of account, when wilful disregard of *any* means of grace, will sign their condemnation, I leave to themselves to answer.

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To assist the argument against these poor objections, it is time we should consider the *benefits* we may expect from due obedience to our Blessed Lord's command; and these are *truly great*, but only the real Christian will receive them; that is, he who is sensible of his *wants* of Christ's help, and believes from his heart, that his Savior would never have appointed *any* ceremony in his Church, but to the *most salutary end*, and as being *positively necessary* to his advancement in piety, and obtaining endless happiness. To all such, the benefits are *inestimable*: even no less than having the spirit of Christ for their continual defence, for all who receive this holy Communion with a *true, and lively faith, are one with Christ, and He with them*. You may judge further, both of the necessity of the ordinance, and the prodigious advantages to be derived from it, by our Lord's own words, in St. John, vi. 53. *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*. As the ignorant Jews (who only listened to the *latter*) enquired *how can this man give us his flesh to eat*; so the ignorant Christian, may doubt how receiving the *signs* only, of *Christ's body broken, and blood shed* can procure us any good. But our Savior's answer, will satisfy *both*. *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*. As if he had said, as the bread of the world nourishes your *bodies*, so do the *words, the power, the spirit* of Christ improve the souls of all who trust in him. It is observable, that our Lord always speaks to the people by way of *figure*, or parable, to represent to them *heavenly* things by the comparison of earthly

earthly things; and thus he calls himself the *bread of life*, and in a spiritual sense affirms, *that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed*. That is, the sacrifice of his body and blood on the cross, was as necessary for the health of men's *souls*, as common food to their *natural lives*, but these things, says he, *are spirit and life*; that is, they must be received and applied *spiritually*; and till people are awake to a sense of their condition by *nature*, and the *necessity* of a Redeemer, they will (like some of Christ's disciples of old) think many of *these, hard sayings, and turn from hearing them*. As soon, then, as people are thoroughly sensible, that to be enabled to subdue the lusts of the flesh, and to obtain *pardon* for past sins, are the most valuable of all blessings, they will confess that such benefits are worth striving for, and they will not fail to use this *particular means* of receiving them.

But the curiosity of the ignorant, or the faithless, may lead them to enquire *how* this is done? They may doubt, as the *Jews* did, *How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* How can a little bread and wine, effect so wonderful a change in a man's disposition, and procure such an extraordinary blessing as eternal life? Doth the receiving these elements act as a *SPELL*? By no means. The manner by which these blessings are applied to us, is the same by which we receive every grace that God bestows upon us; namely, by *serious consideration, faith, and prayer*. When we reflect what a *deep root* sin hath taken in our nature; when we are assured that it must ruin us *eternally*, if we *yield* to it; we are naturally led to seek for help against its

power, and to depend upon HIM, who hath atoned, and satisfied for its *effect*. These thoughts put us on our *guard*, and fit us for receiving the necessary assistance for correcting our depraved nature. The thorough sense of our own insufficiency for any thing that is good *without* that aid, and the natural desire of escaping punishment, leads us to rely upon HIM, who hath *promised*, and is *mighty to save*. These are the plain, and leading grounds of our *faith*; and that it may not waver, we employ the useful help of constant *prayer* to keep us in the right way. These you see are rational, and ready methods of proceeding. As to the manner of the *effect*, we leave that to God.* Our Lord himself checks all vain *curiosity* concerning his divine operation on the mind, by his clear, and full reply to Nicodemus on a similar occasion. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, (saith he,) and we hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, and so are all they that are born of the spirit.* As by *seeing*, and *feeling* the effects of the *air*, that is sufficient to convince us it *exists*, so, if we *experience* such a *hatred for our sins*, and *fear for our souls*, as will engage us to use the means of being delivered from the danger we are in, without God's grace; we may be assured the work of God is *begun* in us, and that he will certainly *perfect* it, if we continue *faithful*. But here I am very sensible *another* difficulty may present itself, to the scrupulous, and the unbeliever: How comes it, say they, that so many who *obey* this commandment, who *receive* this holy sacrament *constantly*, do still continue very deficient in many *chris-*

christian virtues? For *two plain reasons*. First; because our state by nature, is so extremely degenerated, and infirm, that in many things *we offend all; there is none that doth good, no not one; even the just man falleth seven times*, saith Solomon. Again, *There is not a just man upon earth that sinneth not*; all which passages, declare, our continual proneness to evil. And the *second* reason is, because people do not receive it with *sufficient thought*, and *veneration*. But there will *ever* be this *essential* difference, (which all who receive sincerely, can abundantly testify,) that they would have been much *less careful*, and consequently much *more wicked*, if they had *never received* at all, and that they go on in hopes of gaining daily ground. I defy any man living to say, that he comes constantly to the Lord's table, with a thorough sense of the *nature* of this holy Sacrament, and yet continues to sin as *wilfully*, and *foully*, as he did *before* he used this means of grace. And as to those who come *without* any sober consideration, it is no wonder they remain bad, or even *increase* in evil, because they do not *properly* apply the means, for it is with this medicine to the *soul*, just as with a remedy for the *body*; what might *cure*, if administered with *caution*, and *judgment*, may turn to *poison*, when taken *wantonly*, and *unseasonably*.

Another reason likewise, why we do not see such *general*, and exemplary effects as this Sacrament is perfectly qualified to convey, is because people do not receive it *often enough*: for it is not, (as I before observed) to act like a *charm*, at *once*. And here we may again avail ourselves of the allusion to
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bodily remedies. Inveterate diseases require a long course of medicine to correct the constitution. *Sin*, is a disease, that will in some degree cleave to the soul as long as it continues in a polluted body: we must therefore trust the grand Physician, and use this easy, gracious remedy he has appointed us, whenever we can procure it. Doubtless the reason, why many of the primitive Christians were so pious in *their* lives, was owing to their so *frequently* receiving the holy Communion. By keeping the object incessantly before their eyes, who saved them both from the *power* and *punishment* of their fallen nature, sin grew daily more *bateful* to them, and by being diligently on their guard, against it, virtue became more *habitual*. By thinking so *constantly* upon the act they were going to perform, they were checked from falling into *gross*, and *damning* sins, and thus the oftener we apply to the throne of God for grace, through the efficacious merits of a dying Savior, we may depend upon it, the stronger we shall find ourselves both in *faith* and *practice*. Again, in dangerous, and *confirmed* disorders, a careful and particular regimen, or regular rule and manner of living, is as absolutely necessary, as the medicine itself, to recover health; at least by the *former*, the *latter* will be greatly assisted in its effect, and the cure much sooner accomplished. And this leads me to the *last* particular I promised to consider for your satisfaction on this important subject. Namely, the NECESSARY PREPARATION required in all, who would wish to profit by their obedience to their Lord's command.

This is a point which supplies another too common excuse for keeping from the Lord's table; the consideration of which I purposely reserved for the conclusive part of your instruction at this time.

People object their great UNWORTHINESS; their *insufficient* PREPARATION. Now the *dangerous* sense in which a Christian can come *unworthily* to the blessed feast provided by their heavenly Master, has been already explained to you in the beginning of this discourse; and very little reflexion, and common understanding alone, is necessary to satisfy every honest, well-disposed person, that they have nothing to fear from *such* objections *properly* considered. In the strict sense of *worthiness*, the best man living is not *duly* qualified to receive the mercies God has prepared for us. It is not for any worth of OURS that salvation is offered us, but for *Christ's merits alone*. Nay, our great *unworthiness* moved the love of God to take *pity* upon our wretched case. Had we been *worthy* of any favor, *Christ need not have died*, nor such an astonishing remedy have been contrived to heal our wounds, but he died for us while we were his *enemies*; therefore to talk of staying till we are WORTHY, is to talk of an *impossibility*, and to say, in other words, WE NEVER *can come*. If, therefore, any of you, are *truly sensible* of your *unworthiness*, you have made a good step towards the *safest preparation*; for this holy Sacrament is not proposed as a *reward* for our being good, but as a *means* of making us so. But as some becoming preparation is certainly required, and that I may not mislead you in so material an
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Article by any thing here advanced, let me recommend, (in order to *prove* whether you *are* prepared) to examine yourselves by these short questions, according both to the Apostle's advice, and that of our own church, and *so come, and eat of the bread, and drink of the cup* which the Lord hath provided for the refreshment of your souls. Are you sensible you are *sinners*? That you are not so good as you *ought* to be, to fit you for the presence of an all-pure God, and the company of perfected spirits? Do you *wish* to become *better*? To be happy angels when you die? Do you believe that Christ is able to save your souls, and *will* do it if you *trust* in him, and *obey* him? Do you know of any certain way of living after his holy laws, *better* than that he hath *himself* proposed to you? If you are *humbly* and *piously* convinced of these truths, defer no longer, to fulfil your christian obligation, and fear not, but the Lord will have mercy upon such failings, as are not the growth of *perverse* and *willful* rebellion, and will not only pardon your past omissions, and offences, but strengthen you to conquer the sins that are most powerful in your carnal nature.

I must not conclude, without adverting to the case of a particular description of christians, which demands attention in this place. There are certainly, some humble, timid souls, who from want of early, and due instruction concerning this holy ordinance, have been prejudiced to think it a ceremony none but very *advanced* christians *should receive*, but this is a gross, and dangerous error.

The very dread of offending their Savior, is a sure sign that such persons are so far *well prepared*. Come unto me, says the Master himself, *all ye that labour, and are heavy laden (that is deeply lamenting your sins) and I will refresh you*. If any of this description are here present, let me assure you, my brethren, for your comfort, that a *deep sense* of your *unworthiness* is the very *best* preparation to please God. “Nothing but
 “an earnest, and continual desire of instruction can
 “qualify us for the knowledge of *the wondrous*
 “*things of God's love*. Every one receives this
 “knowledge only in the same degree that he *de-*
 “*sires* it: and a *great* degree of that desire, is the
 “proper preparation for receiving the sacrament of
 “the Lord's Supper.”

The very *end* of this holy institution is to preserve you from *growing in sin*, and to save you from the continual *temptation*, to which you are exposed from a *corrupted nature*, in a *wicked world*. To *youth*, of both sexes, therefore, it may be prescribed as the most precious medicine of the soul. *Long* and *formal* preparations independant of *purity of intention*, will profit nothing. The resolution of a *week*, or a *day*, if the *WILL* is *sincerely turned to God*, is sure to be accepted of him. But that you may not *mistake* me, as seeming to encourage an *inconsiderate* obedience to the command, when I speak in favor of a *shorter* preparation; I repeat, when the *will*, the *purpose* of the soul, feels inclined to live to God, and please him, instead of yielding to the sinful pleasures of the world, and the flesh, (not when it has entirely eradicated those desires,
 for

for they will ever afford exercise for our christian warfare), when it truly *wishes* there were no such *hinderances* to a holy life, it is then duly prepared to apply this means of obtaining further supplies of grace. The sacrifice of the *young*, and *healthy*, is always most pleasing to God. *My Son*, saith he, *give me thine heart* : *that*, is the seat of all good, or bad pursuit; *thence* are the issues of life, or death. You who are *entering* upon the perilous voyage of life, have *particular* need of your Savior's protecting hand; flee to him, for you cannot stand alone, *without him you can do nothing* acceptable to the Father. You who have *long neglected* his gracious commands, cannot be *too earnest* to *redeem the time*, and shew your gratitude for his mercy, and long-suffering, in sparing you to see your error, and correct it, by vigilant obedience for the *future*. And you who are on the very *verge of eternity*, who from the decline of nature, *begin to stumble upon the dark mountains*; you surely, should be thankful to God for his great goodness in affording you an opportunity of *kissing the Son*, before his just displeasure is inflamed against you, past all recovery; that you may go down to the grave in peace, nor die without having worshipped the God of your fathers, according to his express appointment.

In short: all who wish to resist the Devil, and all his works, and to live to God and holiness, *are prepared*; are *well* prepared to accept God's means (through Christ) of fitting them, for immortal life and glory.

Let me exhort you then, my brethren, not to delay this *accepted time*. The approaching season, that reminds us of Christ's *resurrection* from the dead, and victory over sin, and death, is one *peculiarly* proper to remind us of rising from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness. Christ now invites you, and presents you with this *means* of grace, through me his most unworthy minister: but though the instrument is insignificant, He who alone giveth the increase, will bless the work to your advantage if your own purpose is sincere. If therefore you value your Redeemer's love, if you prize your own souls, do not resist this blessed opportunity, but close with the offer of his mercy, in his *own way*. Depend upon it, he knows best *how* to save you, and that if you continue disobedient, instead of a *Savior*, (which you might now assure to yourselves,) he will meet you as a tremendous *judge*, and condemn you as obstinate, ungrateful sinners, who despised his counsel, and preferred the service of *his* enemy, and the eternal enemy of your salvation.

May God work *better* resolutions in the hearts of all who hear me, for His sake, who is the *Light*, the *Life*, and the *Truth*, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, praise, and power, for ever and ever, *Amen*.

SERMON XXVIII.

A FUNERAL SERMON.

PART OF THE BURIAL SERVICE.

In the midst of life we are in death, of whom then may we seek for succour, but of Thee O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?

WHAT, my brethren, can incline us to more serious thoughts, than this most solemn notice delivered at the grave of every fellow-creature? A due consideration of these affecting words, will furnish many suitable reflexions upon the present melancholy occasion. Surely they must sufficiently point out to you the misery, and uncertainty of life, and urge you to take warning lest your days be shortened *through the deceitfulness of sin*; for here, we have a most alarming proof, that *the wages of sin is death*; that sin always carries a degree of punishment with it, even in *this life*, and that we cannot too soon lament, and amend our evil habits, lest we be hurried to the place where there is no repentance.

The approach of death in *general*, is the most affecting thing in nature; even the expiring of *animals*, has something *terrible* in it. An unspeakable

ble consciousness that we are made to live for ever, awakes occasional dread of what may come hereafter; it creates a shock at the sight of dissolution in *any* form, and makes us tremble at the consequence of the SECOND DEATH. *Mortality*, is the curse of God for *sin*. Even the spotless Jesus, when in human nature, felt *all its terrors*. *He was sorrowful unto death*. He prayed, (under the influence of mortal fear) that if possible, the *bitter* cup might pass from him, and why? because being *made sin for us*, that is bearing the *punishment* of it in his body, this was *part* of his *suffering*. If then, He who had *no sin* in himself, did necessarily experience its *effects*, is it wonderful that the *actual* sinner should be afraid to die? Can any thing subdue that fear but the spirit of Him who was in Jesus? How needful then, my friends, to make *acquaintance* with that spirit? *That Holy Guest* must have his habitation *swept and garnished* for his reception. We can never hope he will take up his dwelling in impure hearts, and habitually sinful bodies. Well, therefore, may death bring horrors to the unregenerate mind; and natural is it, that when we see a fellow-creature in the act of dying, it should force us to *consider our latter end*. But of all the instances in which mortality is *particularly* moving, to behold a man decaying in the *prime of life*, this is truly so. To such, this observation may justly be applied, *He cometh up like a flower, and is cut down, he fleeth like a shadow*. This having been the case of our departed neighbor, many circumstances present themselves, to which I would intreat your *serious attention*.

It is not very common, I am aware, to preach a funeral sermon, but by *particular request*; and less usual, perhaps, to deliver such discourses but in remembrance of the *great and good*, in order to encourage virtue in the *living*, by the example of those who are gone before to their *reward*; and to make us fit loose to the charms of this vain scene, by the cheering prospect of inheriting a *better state*. But for once I will venture to change the order of these solemn exhortations, and try if some good may not be wrought in following another plan; viz. by a serious *warning*, to teach you to avoid the rock on which the dissolute and thoughtless, hourly make wreck,—not of the favour of men; not barely of this world's goods, nor of human life alone:—but, of what is far more valuable than *all* together,—THE LOSS OF THEIR IMMORTAL SOULS. Engaged, as I am, my brethren, in the important business of directing you in the way to happiness, was I to neglect so choice an opportunity of speaking to your feelings, I should condemn myself as wanting towards *you*, and wounding my own conscience in the highest degree.

Here, then, *before us*, is the *book*, my friends, from whence I mean to speak to you at present; the *remains* of your neighbour and companion! His fate holds forth to *you*, the most awakening observations, which you will do well to weigh, and pray to God to fix them in your hearts. Sicknefs, and death, my brethren, have paid an alarming visit to our village, this year, and warrant my offering some seasonable counsel on the occasion. The
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things, or persons had once *existed*, and there *stop*? No, surely; if the person was very near and dear to us, we should not be satisfied, with just recollecting, that he once lived on earth, but we should fondly *dwell* upon those virtues, and accomplishments, that occasioned our attachment to him. If he happened to be a *benefactor* also, we should as naturally esteem his memory from a sense of the *benefits* we had received from him; so that you cannot avoid perceiving, but that something *more* is implied in the words, *in remembrance of ME*, than the single recollection, that Christ lived and died upon this earth; for depend upon it, if we remember our Saviour in no *better way* than this, the frequent acknowledging that *any* celebrated character *whatever*, was once in *being*, will equally profit us in a religious point of view. The act of memory must therefore carry us *farther*, when we perform this holy ceremony as a *memorial* of the LORD OF LIFE. We must take the words, *do this in remembrance of ME*, in the *full spiritual* sense that they will bear, and which, indisputably, they were intended to convey, by Him that spake them. If then, we indulge a serious meditation in this place, we shall naturally be led to consider the peculiar *office*, and *dignity* of the person here *to be remembered*. The mind of a *Christian* will furnish him with some such thoughts as these.—Christ commands me, *to do this act in remembrance of HIM*; I must therefore revert to the holy life He led for my *example*; the bitter sufferings He endured, to teach me *patience*, and *resignation*; and the cruel death He underwent,

laws. And if we pray to Him, and trust in Him, He, to whom all power is given, in Heaven, and earth, will send the spirit of holiness into our hearts, will strengthen us to resist temptation, and by the various outward means of grace, will purify us here, and prepare us for everlasting happiness hereafter. What riches of mercy is here held out, to sinful, helpless, undeserving creatures! But oh! the perverseness of the human will! conceived in sin, and rebellious from the womb, we resist God's gracious invitations from our earliest years, and most truly applicable is Solomon's description of fallen nature, to the case before us: *As soon as men are born, they begin to draw near their end; they have no sign of virtue to show, but are consumed in their wickedness.* (Wisdom v. 13.) Still doth the spirit of God continue to strive with the sons of men. Sickness, or misfortune, are the natural evils he renders instrumental in his mercy, to rouse numbers from their deadly state: and this leads me to the second reflection to be derived from the meditations which the text supplies. For by these, we are loudly warned to cry out, *of whom may we seek for succour, but of Thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased.* Let us dwell a little upon this passage.

In the very punishment of sin in this life, God wills our recovery: *in the midst of judgment he remembereth mercy.* He cannot avoid being naturally, and justly displeased, at our ungrateful, wicked conduct, but he desireth not the death of any sinner, and would rather he should return from his wickedness, and live. Even out of evil his sovereign power can bring good.

good, and sometimes (when deserving finally to be cut off) He draws us with the *cords of love*, that, if possible, the heart may be inclined to listen to his voice, and turn unto Him. But most dangerous is it to provoke and tempt his tender, long-suffering, and gracious goodness! *He calleth once, yea, twice, but men regard not.* Now this was the very case of the young man who is now cut off from the light of the sun. Early, was his introduction to disorderly, and intemperate ways: *ah! what repentance is necessary to those, who either encouraged, or did not restrain him!* Frequent, and remarkable were his warnings (even within *my* remembrance) and *short his course.* He pursued iniquity with greediness, and you see the *end* of it in him. The same, sooner or later, must be the *fate* of *all*, who boldly trample on the commandments of their God! How terrible for those, whose evil habits are confirmed by *length of years*, whose repentance is put off through the *hardness of their hearts!*

How should this affect his companions in riot and debauchery! But like the dastardly servants of a bad master, when the game of vice is over, they forsake each other. Nothing is so base, and cowardly as *SIN.* It is afraid, even *here*, to behold its own picture: Consider then, my brethren, what must be its dreadful lot, *hereafter*, and perhaps it may awaken in you some *saving fear!* Can you bear the thought of *dwelling for ever in utter darkness! weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth?* without relief, without *hope*, and where *the smoke of the torment* of ungodliness *ascends for ever and ever?* *Who can*

hear the thought of endless burnings? Take warning, then, my friends, in *time*. Every event of this kind is intended as an example, as a particular *call*, to all whose similar course of life requires reproach, and admonition. Doubtless *some* of this congregation have joined the thoughtless, and debauched misconduct of the deceased, at different times. Reflect upon the guilty part which must be brought against you for having helped on his *weakness* to increase his *sins*. His day of trial is past, *yours* is at *band*. The Lord above knows only, how long or short it may continue. This is the *second* fatal sacrifice to intemperance, since I have been among you. The former, in some respects, *more shocking*; an unhappy reprobate! whom you all remember, and who had refused incessant, and most gracious offers of mercy; every kind advice; every friendly help, every religious check was tried, but all in vain: at length left to the power of his own base appetites, and the government of the wicked spirit, he fell a martyr to impenitence, and vice. He was cut off and perished in a fit of beastly intoxication. Loss of reason to direct, loss of strength to save himself, exposed him to the wishes of the *tempter*. O that this might warn all those who are slaves to brutal lusts! *If in the midst of life, we are in death* (as we truly are) even when in *health, sobriety, and youth*, how rashly do THEY hasten their ruin, who by excess of *any kind*, become their own destroyers!

But let us weigh the nature of this crime *more closely*. No man can be so dull, as not to know, that
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that he who kills *himself*, is certainly a *MURDERER*; nay, he is the *worst* of murderers: for it is allowed on all hands, that he who killeth father, mother, brother, wife, or friend, is guilty of most aggravated wickedness, at which our nature thudders. And *why* is this? Because the parties being so *near* him, it shews how far the power of hell has gotten the utmost victory over ties, which ought to bind us by the *tenderest* love. Now what can be *more dear* to us, than our *very selves*? *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Therefore, if I destroy both body and soul, by my own base practices, I certainly declare myself the foulest, and most wicked murderer. And what avails the difference of the *means*, so I effectually accomplish the *fatal end*? Is he less a murderer, who kills his dearest friend by a *slow poison*, than he who takes him off by a *sudden blow*? surely *not*, and therefore every man who destroys his health by *excess of liquor* (as it is impossible but he must be sensible of the certain consequence at *last*) he *is*, and justly must be reckoned, in the eye of *reason*, *religion*, and his *Maker*, as verily the murderer of himself. As to the quality, or *degree* of sin, it matters nothing (so it opposes the law of God) whether the effect appears in *few*, or *many years*; and the cause of my so earnestly exhorting you to flee *this* vice, is because of the *double* iniquity it produces, in adding murder to intemperance. In truth it is the forerunner and temptation to almost every other filthy crime that can be named. *Be not deceived*, then, my brethren, since it is the word of God that

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that warns you, *that neither drunkards, nor murderers, nor fornicators, nor adulterers, shall ever inherit the kingdom of Heaven.*

When, therefore, man brings on complaints in consequence of their debaucheries, and natural judgments follow, we may truly say of such, *that for their sins God is justly displeased*; and all who hear me will do wisely to consider, the mighty difference, both in point of *conscience*, and the little hope of Divine favour, in case their sickness is of their *own procuring*, or from the natural infirmities, and various accidents to which we are exposed in our mortal bodies. It is true, we are *all sinners*, and we all deserve punishment. But essentially different, are the feelings from the immediate effects of vice upon the profligate, and what the ordinary visitation of providence produces upon the *sober, wary* Christian, when subjected to Divine correction: the *former* (if happily at all awakened) is unavoidably oppressed with *doubts*, and *fears*, and *miserable uncertainty*; alas! he has every thing to *learn*, at a time he needs most consolation from religious knowledge. On the other hand, when the *temperate and careful* man is overtaken by disease; and especially if he has laid in a store of Christian information, *he* is calm, and resigned; receives it in the light of salutary *abastisement*; takes the advantage of the visitation to review his past mistakes; forms in future, better resolutions; and bowing to the wisdom of the Supreme Director, he exclaims with holy Job, *even though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* The powerful and blessed Spirit to whom he hath looked up in the day of his

his prosperity, and ease; now comforts and supports him; He supplies the needful aid his situation calls for: *He helps the spirit of a man to sustain his weakness, for a wounded spirit who can bear?*

But oh! how melancholy is the contrast of the ignorant, desponding, self-condemned sinner! How moving are his looks, when confession and repentance are *pressed upon him*! How piercing are the heart-fetched sighs! how *truly* pitiable the doubtful signs, of a shaking head, and hands lifted up in self abhorrence! when (as it sometimes happens) the powers of speech and spirits are unequal to assist instruction, or convey the labouring burthen of his inward trouble!—How must every spectator sympathize in such *excess of misery*!

These are the scenes to which the thoughtless certainly *must* arrive, unless in just displeasure, God casts them off for ever, and leaves them to themselves; *then*, indeed, will they go on, in sin, and hardened, day by day, will live and die like *brutes*, and not as men. But a better portion let us charitably hope, has been prepared for *him*, whose untimely end hath led me to this necessary task of general exhortation, ———, though *dead, he now speaketh*, by the example of his latter days. More than all sermons, would have been his plaintive whispers to you, on the subject of his wicked courses; which in their *consequence*, denied the powers of *voice*. Had any of you inquired of him his latest thoughts of what he once pursued so madly, he would have told you, *truly, there is no profit in the things whereof I am now ashamed*. Had he

he possessed worlds, he would have given them *all* to redeem his mispent time; he would have given *life*, that he had never passed an unreasonable hour in a public house, or herded with the drunkard, or the scorner. Had you heard him lament his foul abuse of God's *most holy Sabbath*; or felt the wounds he owned, for having often passed in *sin*, that *precious time*, most mercifully provided to serve his God, and fit his soul for heaven; it doubtless would have smitten your hearts, and under the influence of God's grace, have helped to check the evil habits that enslave you.—

This sketch of his great delinquencies, and late contrition, reminds me of another portion of his misconduct, which may greatly profit you to consider duly. There is a crime, my brethren, which cleaves to fallen nature, and fills up the measure of every other sin; when shewn to *man*, it renders us completely hateful, but when practised towards God, it sinks us below the nature of the very beasts. It is **INGRATITUDE**. I will instance a particular on this occasion, that now occurs to me, and which with God's blessing may work conviction on the minds of some who hear me. Your departed neighbour and companion belonged to a society, founded in humanity, reason, and even religious foresight. During his long lingering illness he has reaped *advantages* from it, as each of you its members would do, was sickness to be *your* portion. But alas! how did he abuse these benefits when *living*? Instead of being thankful for the *increase*, when occasionally the common stock

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has been *divided*, how *ungratefully*, how *wickedly*, and *perversely* has he employed *his share* in surfeiting a beastly appetite; in dishonoring God, and endangering his own soul. Whereas, *prosperity* in our undertakings, should lead us to adore and praise Him for his mercies, and to make a wise and sober use of our success. If any are present, who have been equally guilty of a behavior so thoroughly disgraceful to so considerate an institution, let them earnestly crave pardon of a long-suffering, but terrible and avenging God; *let them instantly repent, and be converted, that their sins may be blotted out*, and pray for grace to avoid temptation for the time to come. For, to turn that into a *curse*, and *misery*, through wanton sin, which God most graciously prospers for our *good*, has something rash and base in it, past all expression. Every indulgence beyond refreshment of the spirits, and strengthening the body, borders upon *vice*, and leads to *further* trespass. We are expressly enjoined in scripture *not to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*; but every one transgressing this wholesome rule, plainly rejects the Apostle's counsel, and prefers the cravings of a brutal appetite, to the positive precepts of the Gospel.

The state of one who has dishonored himself by intemperance, is most affectingly described by an English Poet. It is so fine a picture of *self-reproach*, and so very applicable to my present subject, that I cannot refrain delivering the passage. “ O (says the penitent) “ that men should put an enemy into
“ their mouths, to steal away their brains ! that we
“ should

“ should with joy, revel, pleasure, and applause,
 “ transform ourselves to *brutes!* To be now a
 “ sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a
 “ beast! O horrible! Every inordinate cup is
 “ certainly unblest, and every ingredient is a
 “ *Devil!*” It almost seems, as if the author had
 transposed the scripture precept on this subject.
 We are commanded to mortify, (or deny) *every inor-*
dinate affection, and to put off all anger, wrath, malice,
blasphemy, and filthy communication, out of our mouths.
 Now to the commission of all these vices you very
 well know that every *inordinate* cup, (that is,
 every *irregular* use of liquor,) doth continually lead
 the drunken man. One imperfection seduceth him
 to another, and forces him most frankly to despise
 himself, when he suffers reason to confer with con-
 science. But this is not the worst, *Drunkards and*
whoremongers God will judge. He has positively and
 repeatedly declared it; that men may shun the sin
 so ruinous to their souls.

From all that has been *said*, then, and what you
 have *here before* you, you cannot but own the dread-
 ful consequence of yielding to the vice of drunken-
 ness; and that *for such sins God is most justly dis-*
pleased.—All that remains from the words of my
 text, is to enquire *now, to whom you may flee for suc-*
cour, when you are happily sensible of the danger
 you have brought upon yourselves, from wilfully
 continuing in any known sin. If, (as before ob-
 served) the very *best* have need to cry to the Lord
 for help, *while in the midst of death*, that is, from the
 uncertain fate of mortals, how much more hath the

sinner cause to exclaim, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* What reason has he to thank God, *through Jesus Christ our Lord, that where sin abounded, there did Christ's grace much more abound, in becoming willingly the offering for sin, to the end that men should not serve sin, but that all might repent and be saved.* To the Lord Jesus, then, you must fly in time, my brethren; implore him to plead with the Father for your forgiveness: pray for a *new heart, and a right spirit within you, and grace to mend your ways, will consequently follow.* Do not rashly flatter yourselves that you may receive even the merciful indulgence of *time* vouchsafed to your deceased acquaintance, but reflect upon the horrors of your unchangeable state, in case your souls be *suddenly* called for, when rioting in *drunkenness, impiety, and sin.* That he was not summoned in such an *unprepared, and filthy* state; that he was spared from many accidents he had provoked; to own his sins; to see his foul ingratitude; to fear the danger, and to cry for *mercy*, afford some *hope* the Lord had not entirely forsaken him. But O, my friends, trust me, it is a hazardous game to play with sin and Satan, till you are past the practice of his lessons. How *sincere* the dying sinner's repentance, NO MAN CAN TELL; true, we must not set bounds to God's uncovenanted grace, but neither dare we promise beyond what he himself hath *spoken.* Though (as the Prophet once said) *I should receive mines of gold and silver, I can speak no more than the Lord hath shewn me.* The scriptures are to us the words of his mouth: by them we must be governed;

vernal; on them we must build. *The soul* (saith God) *that sinneth, it shall die.* Repentance is the only cure; but *repentance is the gift of God.* They who will not seek the gift while it may be found, must be acknowledged in a dangerous way, because Christ the Physician himself, the Dispenser of the cure, says, *unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* But what mortal living dare assure this gift is effectually bestowed to inveterate sinners at the *latest hour*? Reason and religion inform us, that repentance is not for the *grave*, but for the *living*; to prepare us to be meet inheritors of the kingdom of grace. We do not say, the sinner's repentance may not be found at *last*, but that, *time, and fruits meet for repentance*, can only prove it so to us, the sons of men. Nay, how can the man *himself*, judge of his *growth in grace* but in proportion as it assists him to resist *temptation*, and for this he must have TRIAL. Hope, fear, weakness of body, and mind, may all contribute to deceive him, when he is just stepping into eternity. Nothing but *miracle* can then assuredly discover the merciful designs of God towards him; but miracles are no conditions of the Gospel covenant of grace. Build not therefore on a death-bed repentance. Trust not to *late and sudden* conversions: be not among those who *tempt* the Lord, hoping their's may be the case of the tardy labourers in the vineyard. Alas! my brethren, this parable supplies no valuable hope, now christianity, is *established*; it holds out no cheering prospect to them who sin on wilfully, till sin destroys them. Those men *waited* to be called, or hired; you have been

been enlisted in your Master's service from your infancy ; *you* have been called ever since you could discern right from wrong. Will you plead that you are still *ignorant* ? That will profit nought. Much you *might* have known, but for your *own fault*. You are *called* every sabbath-day to hear and learn ; you are called by the advice of your friends and ministers ; you are called daily by your own consciences ; by continual warnings, and examples all around you : and now, by the fate of a departed brother, in ignorance, and iniquity. Again : as to the late laborers who were rewarded for working but *one hour*, yet we know they did ACTUALLY work, and doubtless the compassionate master observed, and accepted their sincerity of endeavors to *make up the time* ; but can you suppose this just Lord would have paid them, after he had called them, in case he had not *found them in the field*, or had seen them IDLE there ? To those then who obey the call in *time*, much consolation may be derived from dwelling on the boundless goodness of the gracious master whom they serve ; that he has allowed them *time*, is a powerful spur to *gratitude, activity, and diligence*. It helps their *faith* and *hope*, that he has spared them yet to work ; that he vouchsafes to hire them even *late*, strengthens their dependance on his mercy, and supports them with the prospect of *increasing* favor, that he will forgive their past unworthiness, and reward their humble, but sincere endeavors to reform. But the presumptuous sinner's case is *very different* ; *he* looks for a *reward*, when it is impossible to *work* ; when night is come ;
when

when men go to *rest*, instead of *labor*; in short, when he is able *to do nothing*; no, not even to profit by the kindness a compassionate master might wish to shew him; that is, unable to *use* the grace once offered him upon the plainest terms. But blessed be the God of all mercies, *we* have still *time* before us, and health and opportunity to improve it in our Master's service, yet as we know not the day or hour of our Lord's coming to call us to account, it behoves us the more diligently to *redeem the time*; to apply these serious, and eternal truths, and fervently implore our Heavenly Father to fix them in our hearts.

To conclude. I have the happiness to think, my brethren, that there needs but very few words to make you thoroughly sensible, that these my feeble efforts in this momentous cause, are heartily intended for your greatest good. Pure love, and unfeigned good-will, direct these earnest exhortations. Some may perhaps dislike to hear me speak out plainly to them *now*, but should they prove so happy as to *profit* by the *warning*, they may possibly bless this hour to ALL ETERNITY; whereas, was I to conceal their danger, and suffer them to tumble blindly into that pit from whence is no deliverance, they might justly curse my want of resolution, and regard. After all, I am but a weak, and *sinful* mortal like *yourselves*, but I have a post, or charge allotted me amongst you. Your best interests I am to defend. It is not in my poor power to turn your *hearts* indeed, or even my *own*; but I am commanded to employ the *means*; and I have, I humbly

hope, on *this* occasion, fulfilled my duty to my flock, my Maker, and myself. For the purpose of our mutual and endless happiness, He has in the unerring design of his wise Providence been pleased to place us on *this scene of trial*, in very different stations. Of *me* it is required to instruct, advise, and warn you to prepare for death. *Your* duty consists in hearing, observing, and praying to God through Christ, to give his blessing to our joint exertions. The day must come, God knows how soon, when we shall be *free spirits*, and experience no distinction but of love, or hatred towards God and goodness. We shall meet face to face in *incorruptible* as now we do in *mortal* bodies. Most needful is it for me to take strict care, both for *your* sakes, and my *own*, that ye may not THEN upbraid me for *not having delivered to you the whole counsel of God: for having prophesied to you smooth things: for not having spoken terrible things, since knowing the terrors of the Lord, my commission was to persuade men to turn to him.* Listen, my brethren, to the awful charge upon me! and you will think it very natural I should miss no opportunity of *warning you to flee the wrath to come.* Thus speaks God to his Prophet Ezekiel, iii. 17. *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to this people, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. If thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his soul, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at THY HAND.* Oh God forbid, that this should ever be the case with us! and wherein I have been wanting, may the Lord forgive it, and still afford me

me time and grace to repent, and amend! But says God again, *If thou do warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, he shall die, but thou hast delivered thy own soul.* You see then clearly, that as I value your salvation, or my own, it is incumbent on me to be plain, and honest with you, to rebuke in season, and out of season, that your spirits may be saved in the day of the Lord. Rather then, may this be the blessed event to both of us. That when delivered from the prison of this body, we may meet with comfort inexpressible, in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, and congratulate each other for ever, *in having escaped the pollution that is in the present world.* May our joy be equal, Mine in praising God for having been enabled to use the talents given me, to good account; and yours, for having had grace to profit by the humble instrument of my faithful labors: so that we may unite to endless ages, in hallelujahs to the Lamb, who hath bought us with his blood, and that dying to sin now, we may rise to life immortal in the heavens. But this can alone be done by striving to *work out our salvation*, and since it is God who *worketh in us both to will and do*, we do therefore glorify him most, when we shew forth the power of his spirit on our mind, and cause our light to shine before our fellow-creatures, by all manner of purity and godly love.

That none of you may fall short of this glory, is my fervent prayer to HIM, who alone can new-create the heart, and to that good end, remember, that now my brethren, is the accepted time, now is

is the time of salvation. Let the time past suffice to have indulged all manner of licentiousness, and ungodly lusts, and turn, though late, to the Lord your God with all your mind, and soul, and strength. *Pray to him to turn you, and so shall ye be turned, but let it be now, while it is day, before the night cometh when no man can work.* Remember *that in the midst of life, we are in death,* and that if you are taken suddenly, and unprepared, not all the wishes of friends, the prayers of ministers, and the church, and your own last trembling struggles united, may be sufficient to make your peace with God; unless the grace of God direct your hearts in due season, there is manifest danger of your making shipwreck of the faith. The presumptuous sinner, it has been fully shewn, must not depend on miracles of favor, on the contrary, the whole tenor of the gospel threatens death eternal to the impenitent, and evil doer. Bring forth fruits then in due season, and think not ye have Christ for a Redeemer, if ye obstinately persist to crucify him daily by your wicked lives. Oh! may the repentance of this busy slave to sin, whose last remains lie now before us, have proved effectual to his everlasting peace! May the useful lesson of *his end,* sink deep into *all our hearts.* And I beseech you all, my friends, while you implore deliverance for *yourselves,* of Him who is mighty to save, pray even for *me,* that while I am endeavouring to point out the safest path to life eternal for you, I may have grace and strength to persevere in every proper duty of my calling, and never fail in every christian exhortation and example,

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ple; *lest while I preach to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* May the merits of Christ Jesus prevail with God the Father so to prepare us now, for the sure and awful change awaiting us, that this our trial over, we may pass through death, to life immortal, and share the blessings God has prepared for all who *fear his name, and long for their Lord's appearing.* To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Creator, Redeemer, and Preserver of his Servants, be all the glory for ever and ever, *Amen.*

The Homilies of the Church of England.

*This Day are published, in Two Volumes, Octavo, Price
14s. in Boards.*

DISCOURSES ON SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

Being the Substance of some select
HOMILIES of the CHURCH of ENGLAND,

Rendered in a modern Style, and fitted for the general Use, and
Christian Instruction of the Community at large.

By the **REV. SIR ADAM GORDON, BART. M.A.**
Late of **CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.**

London: Printed for **JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.**

The following Character of the above Work is taken from
the **BRITISH CRITIC**, for **SEPTEMBER, 1795.**

“ **TITLE PAGES** which promise much more than the books perform, so frequently occur, that it is not without some portion of surprise we notice, in the case before us, the very contrary fault. From the expressions here recited, we feared, on a first view, that the reverend author had confined his illustrations to a select, perhaps only a very small part, of the Homilies of the Church; and were inclined to regret, that a plan so obviously useful had not been pursued in a more extensive manner. But, on examination, we find, to our great satisfaction, the whole set of discourses modernized, with the exception of only one entire Homily, and particular parts of two or three others; for which omissions very adequate reasons are assigned. The modesty of Sir Adam Gordon has certainly induced him to lower his expressions too far; instead of the “substance of some select Homilies,” he should have said, the substance of the Homilies: or, if very scrupulous, he might have subjoined, “with a few omissions.” Thus we have before us the very book we wished, but hardly hoped to find: the Homilies accommodated, in point of style, to the taste and understanding of the times; and we have not lately seen a book more likely to be useful. That respect for our pious and judicious ancestors, which modern arrogance is but too eager to throw off, will revive, at least in candid minds, when their thoughts are contemplated with the advantages of improved language; when
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it is found that if they were not eloquent, they were yet learned in the scriptures, correct in their reasonings, and not less acute in judgment than those who venture to despise them.

The Homilies of our Church consist of two parts, or books. The first, containing twelve discourses, was published in the reign of Edward VI., the tenth of them being drawn up, says Fuller, at or about Ket's Rebellion; which, however, must be a mistake, since they were published in the first year of Edward's reign, and that rebellion did not break out till the third. The second book was published in the reign of Elizabeth, and consists of twenty-one Homilies; both were approved and established afterwards, in the thirty-fifth article of the Church. Of their authors little is known, and Fuller tells us that objections were raised from this obscurity of their origin. "However some," he says, "behold these Homilies as not sufficiently legitimated by this article to be (for their doctrine) the undoubted issue of the Church of England, alledging them composed by private men of unknown names, who may probably be presumed, at the best, but the chaplains of the archbishops under whom they were made." Be that as it may, they were issued with the avowed approbation of the head of the Church, and pronounced in the article to contain "godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for those times." If it be thought by any persons, as it has indeed been alledged, that their utility was confined to those times, it may be answered in the words of Sir A. Gordon, that, "the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel being (like their author) the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, unless it can be shown that the subjects enforced by the Homilies are contradictory to the Evangelical model; if they were fit for the times in which they were written, they must be granted equally so in all times;" p. lxii. or, as Fuller more cautiously expresses himself, "I confesse what is necessary in one age may be lesse needfull in another, but what in one age is godly and wholesome doctrine (characters of commendation given by the aforesaid article to the Homilies) cannot in another be ungodly and unhealthfull; as if our faith did follow fashions, and truth alter with the times." *Church Hist. B. ix. p. 75.*—Many objections have, however, been made to them, which will be best refuted by perusing the Homilies themselves: and this the worthy editor of these volumes has rendered easy, to persons of all descriptions, by the care he has judiciously bestowed upon their language.

The Homily entirely omitted by this editor is the second of the second book, against peril of idolatry, and superfluous decking of churches, which being directed entirely against errors of the Romish Church, is deemed unnecessary, in the present state of things. The few other parts omitted are past over chiefly for the same reason: and they do not amount altogether to the quantity of a single Homily. That on idolatry is by far the longest of the set, and, as it contains much curious matter, perhaps it would not have been amiss to have given a short summary of its contents.

The modernization of these discourses appears to us to be performed

formed in the most judicious manner; nothing is altered wantonly, or without sufficient reason. The doctrines, and their illustrations are preserved in general in the order they have in the original, and the whole is reduced into such a form as was doubtless pleasing as well as edifying to Sir A.'s parishioners, for whom the task was undertaken, and would be so to any other congregation. But we cannot better illustrate the manner of the performance, than by giving a passage from the original, subjoining that which is parallel to it in the present publication. We take it, without much selection, from the sermon on christian love and charity.

“ PART I. HOM. 6.

“ Of all things that be good to bee taught vnto Christian people, there is nothing more necessary to be spoken of, and dayly called vpon, then charity : aswell for that all maner of workes of righteoufnesse bee contayned in it, as also that the decay thereof is the ruine or fall of the world, the banishment of vertue, and the cause of all vice. And for so much as almost euery man, maketh and frameth to himselfe charity after his own appetite, and how detestable fouer his life bee, both vnto God and man, yet hee perswadeth himselfe still that he hath charity : therefore you shall heare now a true and plaine description or setting foorth of charity, not of mens imagination, but of the very wordes and example of our Saviour Jesus Christ. In which description or setting foorth, euery man (as it were in a glasse) may consider himselfe, and see plainly, without errour, whether hee bee in the true charity or not.

“ Charity is, to loue God with all our heart, all our soule, and all our powers and strength. With all our heart : That is to say, that our heart, minde, and study be set to beleue his word, to trust in him, and to loue him aboue all other things that wee loue best in heauen or in earth. With all our life : that is to say, that our chiefe ioy and delight be set vpon him and his honour, and our whole life giuen vnto the seruice of him aboue all things, with him to liue and die, and to forsake all other things, rather then him. For he that loueth his father or mother, sonne or daughter, house, or land, more then me (sayth Christ) is not woorthy to haue me. With all our power, that is to say, that with our hands and feete, with our eyes and eares, our mouthes and tongues, and with all our parts and powers, both of body and soule, we should be giuen to the keeping and fulfilling of his commandements. This is the first and principall part of charity, but it is not the whole : for charity is also to loue euery man, good and euil, friend and foe, and whatsoever cause be giuen to the contrary, yet neuertheless to beare good will and heart vnto euery man, to vse our selues well vnto them, aswell in wordes and countenances, as in all our outward actes and deedes ; for so Christ himselfe taught, and so also hee performed indeed. Of the loue of God hee taught in this wise vnto a doctour of the law, that asked him which was the great and chiefe commandment in the law. Loue thy Lord God (sayd Christ) with all thy heart, with all thy soule, and with all thy mind

mind. And of the love, that wee ought to haue among our selues each to other, he teacheth vs thus, You haue heard it taught in times past, Thou shalt loue thy friend, and hate thy foe: But I tell you, Loue your enemies, speake well of them that defame and speake euil of you, doe well to them that hate you, pray for them that vex and persecute you, that you may be the children of your father that is in heuen. For he maketh his sunne to rise both vpon the euil and good, and sendeth raine to the iust and vniust. For if you loue them that loue you, what reward shall you haue? Doe not the Publicanes likewise? And if you speake well onely of them that be your brethren and deare beloned friends, what great matter is that? Doe not the Heathen the same also? These bee the very wordes of our Saviour Christ himself, touching the loue of our neighbour. And forasmuch as the Pharisees (with their most pestilent traditions, and false interpretations, and glosses) had corrupted, and almost clearly stopped vp this pure Well of Gods liuely word, teaching that this loue and charity pertayned onely to a mans friends, and that it was sufficient for a man to loue them which doe loue him, and hate his foes: therefore Christ opened this Well againe, purged it and scoured it by giuing vnto his godly law of charitie, a true and cleare interpretation, which is this: that we ought to loue every man, both friend and foe, adding thereto what commodity we shall haue thereby, and what incommmodity by doing the contrary. What thing can we wish so good for vs, as the eternall heauenly father, to reckon, and take vs for his children? And this shall we bee sure of (sayth Christ) if we loue every man without exception. And if we doe otherwise (sayth he) we bee no better then the Pharisees, Publicanes, and Heathen, and shall haue our reward with them, that is, to be shut out from the number of Gods chosen children, and from his euerlasting inheritance in heauen." P. 40.

MODERNIZED.

"Of all the virtues necessary to be earnestly recommended to christians, there is none of greater benefit, or more worthy to be enforced, than charity; for in truth this single word comprises all manner of righteousness, and the decay of it amongst us is the certain cause that virtue daily declines, vice gains ground, and the whole world hasteneth to destruction. And because almost every man formeth to himself a kind of charity, the offspring of his own fancy, a quality after his own desire; and however faulty his life may be in many respects, both in the sight of God and man, yet he will persuade himself he possesses this virtue: the object therefore, of the present discourse, is to give you a true and plain description of this exalted christian property, not as it is pictured by men's own imaginations, but according to the words and example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: in which account of it, every one considering himself as it were in a glass, may see clearly, without any danger of error, whether he is in possession of true charity or not.

"Perfect charity then, is but another name to signify the purest love of God; whom we are to love with all our heart, with all our
life,

life, and with all our powers, or strength. By the expression with all our heart, is meant that our mind and study be employed in the belief of God's holy word, to trust in him, and to love him above all things that we most desire, either in heaven or earth. By the words with all our life, we mean that our chief joy and delight be placed on God, and in promoting his honour; and that all the actions of our lives be principally dedicated to his service, being willing to live or die for Him, and to forsake all other things whatever rather than the love of our Creator: *for whatsoever loved father or mother, son or daughter, house or land, more than me, saith Christ, he is not worthy of me.* By all our powers or strength is to be understood the religious exercise of every faculty we possess, that our hands and feet, (our industry and labor) our eyes and ears, (our observation and diligence in God's cause) our mouths or tongues, (our discourse and conversation, both in instructing others, and advancing ourselves) in short, every part and power of both body and soul, should be devoted in some respect or other, in praising God, and keeping his commandments. This is the first and principal part of this heavenly virtue, but not the whole of it; for true christian charity strictly requireth a degree of love towards all mankind; good or bad, friend or foe; and whatever cause may have been given us for the contrary, as carnal men, yet we must bear good-will to all, and conduct ourselves religiously towards each other in words and manner, no less than genuine benevolence and generous actions. Thus it is that Christ hath taught us, and so indeed be asked.

“ Concerning the love of God, this is his doctrine as recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, xxii. 37. In his answer to a doctor of the law, who asked him which was the great commandment. These are his words: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind:* and as to the love we owe each other, his precepts are no less plain and positive, as related in St. Matthew v. 43, &c. *You have heard that it was said of them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust: for if ye love them which love you only, what reward have ye, do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others, do not even the publicans the same?* Now these you all know, are the very words of our Saviour Christ himself, respecting the love of our neighbour; and because the Pharisees, with their deluding traditions and false interpretations, had not only corrupted but almost entirely stopped up this pure fountain of God's lively word, teaching that this love or charity extended only to a man's friends; and that it was enough for a person to return affection towards those who were partial to him, and that they might hate their enemies; therefore Christ, as it were, opened this fountain again for the people, cleared away the obstructions it had received, and entirely purified the stream, by

giving a true and clear explanation of this perfect law of charity ; by shewing, that in a strict religious sense we must cherish pure good-will to all. Further, our Lord confirmed and recommended this holy precept, by setting forth the benefits we should receive by due observance of it ; and on the contrary, what evil would ensue from our neglect thereof. For what possible thing can any one desire more profitable, than that the eternal God of heaven should adopt us for his children ? And this our blessed Master assures us will be the case, if we love each other upon the principles of our being equally the work of his hands ; if we discover no exception in the discharge of christian offices, through malicious passions or selfish preference ; whereas if we neglect this duty from any such causes, He declares we are no better than deluded Pharisees, profane publicans, and ignorant heathens, and shall have our reward together with them ; that is, to be shut out from the number of God's elect, and from an everlasting inheritance in heaven."—
P. 91.

“ Wherever we have compared Sir Adam Gordon's edition with the original, the same modest reserve and sound judgment in alteration appear to us to prevail ; and the whole work seems clearly to prove that the polish of language was the chief advantage wanting to render the Homilies, as respectable in these days, as they were when first issued. We recommend the publication with pleasure, and doubt not that its effect will be such as the pious editor proposed in undertaking it.”

Missions in America from 1734 to 1787.

*This Day is published in One large Volume Octavo, illustrated
with a Map, Price 8s. 6d. in Boards,*

HISTORY OF THE MISSION

OF THE

UNITED BRETHREN,

Among the Indians in North America. In three Parts.

By GEORGE HENRY LOSKIEL.

Translated from the German

By CHRISTIAN IGNATIUS LA TROBE.

London: Printed for JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.

The following Account of this Work is extracted from the
BRITISH CRITIC, for SEPTEMBER 1795.

“No class of Christians have been more indefatigable in their endeavours to communicate the light of revealed religion to the most remote and uncivilized tribes, than they who style themselves *Unitas Fratrum*, or the United Brethren, popularly known by the name of Moravians. The cold of Greenland could not check their ardour, the wilds of America could not daunt their courage. The account of their mission in Greenland, together with the history of that country, written in German by the celebrated Crantz, has long been known as a book conveying much information. The ancient and modern history of their church was written by the same Crantz, and translated by Benjamin La Trobe; a man most highly and justly esteemed, not only within the pale of his own communion, but wherever he was known; and, if we mistake not, the father of the present translator. There is also a brief account of their mission among the Esquimaux Indians, and these books, together with the present work of Loskiel, contain the whole body of their history. As early as the year 1727, which was soon after the restoration of the Unity of the Brethren, (as they express it) they began, says this historian, “to take the conversion of the Heathen in general into the most earnest consideration, believing themselves called by God to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Heathen nations, and especially to such, who till then had been left totally ignorant, and whose instruction was not attended to by any other denomination.” The first missionaries were sent in 1732 to St. Thomas, a Danish island in the West Indies, and others went in the following year to Greenland. The mission for North America set out in 1734.

“In translating this work from the German of Loskiel, Mr. La Trobe has certainly performed a very useful task for the English part

of his brethren, and he has supplied to other readers a book of much entertainment, and still more instruction. It is divided into three parts; the first of which contains a general account of the American Indians, their tribes, their manners, and customs, and the produce of their country in all the classes of natural history. This part consists of eleven chapters, into which the subjects are conveniently distributed. The second part takes up the history of the mission, and continues it in chronological order, from its commencement in 1734 to the year 1764. Part the third continues it to the year 1787.

“ In the first part, all particulars that are known of these Indians are well collected, but there is not a great deal that may not be found in other books. As, in all accounts of our treaties with these nations, mention of the strings and belts of wampom frequently occurs, it will probably be acceptable to most of our readers to peruse an exact account of what they are, and how employed.

“ *Wampom* is an Iroquois word, meaning a muscle. A number of these muscles strung together is called a *string of wampom*, which, when a fathom long, is termed a fathom or *belt of wampom*, but the word *string* is commonly used whether it be long or short. Before the Europeans came to North America, the Indians used to make their strings of wampom chiefly of small pieces of wood of equal size, stained either black or white. Few were made of muscles, which were esteemed very valuable and difficult to make; for, not having proper tools, they spent much time in finishing them, and yet their work had a clumsy appearance. But the Europeans soon contrived to make strings of wampom, both neat and elegant, and in great abundance. These they bartered with the Indians for other goods, and found this traffic very advantageous. The Indians immediately gave up the use of the old wooden substitutes for wampom, and procured those made of muscles, which, though fallen in price, were always accounted valuable.

“ These muscles are chiefly found on the coast of Virginia and Maryland, and are valued according to their colour, which is brown, violet, and white. The former are sometimes of so dark a shade that they pass for black, and are double the price of the white. Having first sawed them into square pieces of about a quarter of an inch in length, and an eighth in thickness, they grind them round or oval upon a common grindstone. Then, a hole being bored lengthways through each, large enough to admit a wire, whipcord, or thin thong, they are strung like beads, and the *string of wampom* is completed. Four or six strings joined in one breadth, and fastened to each other with fine thread, make a *belt of wampom*, being about three or four inches wide, and three feet long, containing perhaps four, eight, and twelve fathoms of wampom, in proportion to its required length and breadth. This is determined by the importance of the subject, which these belts are intended either to explain or confirm, or by the dignity of the persons to whom they are to be delivered. Every thing of moment transacted at solemn councils, either between the Indians themselves, or with the Europeans, is ratified and made valid by strings and belts

belts of wampom. Formerly they used to give sanction to their treaties by delivering a wing of some large bird; and this custom still prevails among the more western nations, in transacting business with the Delawares. But the Delawares themselves, and the nations in league with them, are now sufficiently provided with handsome and well wrought strings, and belts of wampom. Upon the delivery of a string, a long speech may be made, and much said upon the subject under consideration: but when a belt is given, few words are spoken, but they must be words of great importance, frequently requiring an explanation. Whenever the speaker has pronounced some important sentence, he delivers a string of wampom, adding, "I give this string of wampom as a confirmation of what I have spoken;" but the chief subject of his discourse he confirms with a belt. The answer given to a speech thus delivered, must also be confirmed by strings and belts of wampom, of the same size and number as those received. Neither the colour, nor the other qualities of the wampom, are matters of indifference, but have an immediate reference to those things which they are meant to confirm. The brown or deep violet, called black by the Indians, always means something of severe and doubtful import; but white is the colour of peace. Thus, if a string or belt of wampom is intended to confirm a warning against evil, or an earnest reproof, it is delivered in black. When a nation is called upon to go to war, or war declared against it, the belt is black, or marked with red, called by them the *colour of blood*, having in the middle the figure of an hatchet in white wampom.

"The Indian women are very dextrous in weaving the strings of Wampom into belts, and marking them with different figures, perfectly agreeing with the different subjects contained in the speech. These figures are marked with white wampom upon the black, and with black upon the white belts. For example, in a *belt of peace*, they very dexterously represent in black wampom, two hands joined. The belt of peace, is white, a fathom long, and a hand's breadth. To distinguish one belt from another, each has its peculiar mark. No belt, except the *war belt*, must show any red colour. If they are obliged to use black wampom, for want of white, they daub it over with white clay; and, though the black may shine through, its value and import is considered as equal to white. These strings and belts of wampom are also documents, by which the Indians remember the chief articles of the treaties made, either between themselves or with the white people. They refer to them, as to public records, carefully preserving them in a chest made for that purpose. At certain seasons they meet to study their meaning, and to renew the ideas of which they were the emblem and confirmation. On such occasions they sit down around the chest, take out one string or belt after the other, handing it about to every person present; and, that they may all comprehend its meaning, repeat the words pronounced on its delivery in their whole connexion. By these means they are enabled to remember the promises reciprocally made by the different parties. And, as it is their custom

to admit even the young boys, who are related to the chiefs, to these assemblies, they become early acquainted with all the affairs of the state; and thus the contents of their documents are transmitted to posterity, and cannot easily be forgotten.

“ The following instance may serve to shew how well this mode of communication answers the purpose of recalling subjects to their memory: a friend of mine, at Philadelphia, gave an Indian a string of wampom, adding, “ I am your friend, and will serve you to the utmost of my power.” Forty years after the Indian returned the string, saying, “ Brother, you gave me this string of wampom, saying, I am your friend, and will serve you to the utmost of my power; I am now aged, infirm, and poor; do now as you promised.” And he generally kept his word. Part I. Page 26.

• The reader will perceive that the translation is delivered in very good language, which seems to us to be uniformly maintained. The following instance displays, in a very pleasing manner, the irresistible effect of candour and confidence, even upon savages. The missionary Rauch had been so traduced to the Indians, that they were rendered suspicious of him; he did not, however, relax his endeavours, trusting they would be finally crowned with success.

“ In these confident hopes he was not disappointed. The Indians began to admire his perseverance, courage, meek, and humble behaviour, and changed their minds. He frequently spent half a day in their cottages, ate and drank with them, and even lay down to sleep among them with the utmost composure. This latter circumstance made a particular impression upon them, and especially upon Tschoop. Once, observing the missionary lying in his hut, fast asleep, he confessed that he was struck with the following thought; “ this man cannot be a bad man; he fears no evil, not even from us who are so savage, but sleeps comfortably, and places his life in our hands.” Upon further consideration he was at length convinced that all the accounts spread by the white people to his prejudice, proceeded merely from malice. He then endeavoured to convince his countrymen, and succeeded so well, that, in a short time, the former confidence and friendship between the Indians and the missionary, was established.” Part II. Page 13.

• We find Count Zinzendorff in person among the Indians, in the year 1742, and meet with some traits of his zeal and courage, in attempting to convert them. After making several regulations, and doing every thing in his power to promote the ends of the mission, he returned to Europe in 1743. In August, 1760, the news of his death arrived in America, and was a subject of great affliction to the missionaries and converted Indians. The general character of this history, is considerable minuteness, seldom distinguished by any striking events; but the impression constantly made by it is admiration of the sincerity and fervent zeal of the brethren, both European and converted. They devote themselves to death, and die, rejoicing in their sufferings with the spirit of primitive christians: one remarkable instance of which appears at Part II, p. 166,

p. 166, and those that follow. The result of their efforts is thus stated at the close of the book.'

" The mission had now stood forty-five years. From a register of the congregation, dated in 1772, we learn, that from the beginning of the mission to that year, seven hundred and twenty Indians had been added to the church of Christ, by holy baptism, most of whom departed this life, rejoicing in God their Saviour. I would willingly add the number of those converted to the Lord since that period; but, as the church-books, and other writings of the missionaries were burnt, when they were taken prisoners on the *Mulkingum* in 1781, I cannot speak with certainty. Supposing even, that from 1772 to 1787, the number of new converts were the same, yet, considering the long standing of the mission, and the great pains and sufferings of the missionaries, the flock collected was very small. The reason of this may be found partly in the peculiar character of the Indian nations, but chiefly in this, that the missionaries did not so much endeavour to gather a large number of baptized heathen, as to lead souls to Christ, who should truly believe in him. This small flock is, however, large enough to be a light of the Lord, shining unto many heathen nations, for the eternal salvation of their immortal souls." Part III. P. 226.

' Such is this history, in which, if the singularities of a peculiar sect occasionally appear, they are not such as are in any way reprehensible, and are accompanied always by the fervour of a truly christian zeal. A picture well worthy to be considered at a period like the present.'

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good, and sometimes (when deserving finally to be cut off) He draws us with the *cords of love*, that, if possible, the heart may be inclined to listen to his voice, and turn unto Him. But most dangerous is it to provoke and tempt his tender, long-suffering, and gracious goodness! *He calleth once, yea, twice, but men regard not.* Now this was the very case of the young man who is now cut off from the light of the sun. Early, was his introduction to disorderly, and intemperate ways: *ah! what repentance is necessary to those, who either encouraged, or did not restrain him!* Frequent, and remarkable were his warnings (even within my remembrance) and *short his course.* He pursued iniquity with greediness, and you see the *end* of it in him. The same, sooner or later, must be the *fate* of *all*, who boldly trample on the commandments of their God! How terrible for those, whose evil habits are confirmed by *length of years*, whose repentance is put off through the *hardness of their hearts!*

How should this affect his companions in riot and debauchery! But like the dastardly servants of a bad master, when the game of vice is over, they forsake each other. Nothing is so base, and cowardly as *SIN*. It is afraid, even *here*, to behold its own picture: Consider then, my brethren, what must be its dreadful lot, *hereafter*, and perhaps it may awaken in you some *saving fear!* Can you bear the thought of *dwelling for ever in utter darkness!* *weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth?* without relief, without *hope*, and where *the smoke of the torment* of ungodliness *ascends for ever and ever?* *Who can*